

IRENE OF CORINTH;
AN
HISTORIC ROMANCE
OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

BY
REV. P. J. HAROLD.

"But there are deeds which should not pass away,
And names that must not wither, though the earth
Forgets her empires——."—BYRON.

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PREFACE.

MANY a book called a history contains less truth than the present volume, which bears the title of a romance. This will be clear to the student who can steal an occasional hour to look over the following pages. But while historic facts form the base, the superstructure is of that airy material called fiction. The first century of the Christian era is so rich a mine of fact and romance, that it is passing strange how few novelists have located a claim upon it. The author has taken the most noteworthy facts of that age—of interest to every Christian—and dressed them up in the garb of a tale ; so as, he hopes, to place them before a class of persons who can never be brought to engage in the comparatively dry reading of text books of history.

Whether the story will be found sufficiently absorbing by the general reader the author has as yet no means of ascertaining ; but he may truly say, that if it afford as much entertainment to those who will read it as it afforded himself while engaged in its composition, it will amply repay a perusal. The

idea of the work was conceived while reading the "Historiche Romane" of the celebrated scholar, Father Bolanden, who has done more than any other writer to put before his countrymen, in its true light, the history of Germany during the middle ages. Exact chronologers may find fault with the order of certain events embodied in this story, as well as with the length of time through which the plot carries them previous to its *dénouement*, but the license so freely accorded, and more freely indulged by all writers of fiction, will, the author trusts, exempt him on this count from too harsh a criticism.

P. J. HAROLD.

NIAGARA, April 10th, 1884.



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IRENE OF CORINTH.

CHAPTER I.

AN AMBITIOUS PARENT.

"Mark you this, Bassanio,
The Devil can cite scripture for his purpose.
An evil soul producing holy witness
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek ;
A goodly apple rotten at the heart ;
O what a goodly outside falsehood hath."

—*Merchant of Venice.*

'T WAS a Summer evening. At an open casement of a house near the inner wall of the beleaguèred city, two females were looking out towards the western sky. "See," said one to her companion, "how they pursue the man without a helmet ; he must be the Roman general." "And they will certainly capture or kill him," rejoined the companion ; "they are surrounding him in great numbers." As she spoke a stalwart Jew poised a long spear, and was on the point of striking Titus, when a young Roman sprang off his horse, and cleft the spearman's skull with a blow of his sword. A hand to hand fight ensued ; but, as reinforcements came up from the Roman lines, Titus was rescued from his perilous situation.

The slanting rays of an Oriental sun were bathing the summit of Calvary with a flood of purple and golden splendor, and projecting the ever-lengthening shadows of the retiring

horsemen back towards the city, as the women gazed after them in silence, and apparently unconscious of the beauty of the distant landscape.

Though both were clad in the customary flowing dress of Hebrew maidens, it was evident to the most careless observer that they were of different nationalities. One sat on a low chair, her elbow resting on her knee, as she leaned against the marble window sill, with her right hand buried to the wrist in the abundant raven-black hair, which fell in long ringlets over the well formed shoulders. Her features were oval, and her lustrous black eyes received additional depths of shading, from the arched brows, and long drooping lashes, where a glistening tear still lingered.

The other stood facing her, leaning against the uncurtained but richly carved frame. She was somewhat above the middle height, lithe and wiry in appearance; and although grief had told upon her, yet there remained in her looks a majesty that instantly impressed one with a sense of awe and reverence. Her brows and lashes were brown and her hair, of the same color, was done up in the fashion of Greek women, and faced with an ampyx. Her forehead was broad and low, her eyes hazel, and her other features in such perfect proportion, and so finely chiselled, that she might serve as a model for a Diana or a Minerva. Above all, her complexion, unlike her companion's, was fair; and the least unusual circumstance would change the snowy whiteness of her cheeks to the hue of the most violently red among roses.

They had not been long at the casement, when just beyond the walls they saw a reconnoitering party of Roman horsemen galloping at full speed over the rough ground, which separated their lines from the city defences. A number of Jewish soldiers, who, as if by magic, sprang up all at once from behind stumps and boulders, were pursuing them, with spears and arrows and endeavoring to cut off their retreat. It was this lively scene that gave occasion to the conversation which opens the chapter. Now hardly was the skirmish over, when the quick Corinthian eye of the taller woman detected Simon the tyrant passing by with her brother. As they drew near she listened attentively to the sound of their voices, but could not understand what they said. She cautiously looked out after them; and although

the expression of the tyrant's face was hid from her, she suspected by his menacing gestures and rapid gait that she was the subject of the conversation. In an instant, the marble statue she might be mistaken for, became instinct with unusual animation. Her eye flashed, the youthful blood mantled rapidly to her brows and temples, and her figure became erect. The fixed resolve of an unbending will, one might read in the rigidly set lips; while withering scorn was written on every one of her defiant features. Anna started from a reverie, and with a woman's quick perception divined the cause of the change. "Dear cousin," she began timidly, "you have seen the tyrant, I heard the voice—" She was about to name him, when she felt that the mention of the word Simon must cause unnecessary pain; so she paused abruptly. "Yes" answered Irene—this was the Corinthian's name. "Yes" she said, as her lips parted no more than it was necessary they should to hurl out the monosyllable, and closed again more rigidly if possible than before. Then, as if suddenly recollecting that it was not Simon who was before her, but her cousin Anna, the muscles of her face relaxed; and while hot tears started to her eyes, she struggled to smile through them on her cousin, who by this time had risen from the trivet, and stood with joined hands looking up compassionately into the face of the sufferer. The two women embraced each other, and after a silent intermingling of tears took up their former positions at the casement. The silence, interrupted only by sobs, became oppressive, and was first broken by Irene. Looking out over the Roman camp (the reader must here be told that our story opens during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus) she raised her left hand towards Heaven, then suddenly letting it fall, she said in a low and mournful tone, merely finishing the sentence which she had been mentally reciting, "yet I must not thus hate him. Dearest cousin," she then said, addressing Anna; "it is unlawful to hate even our enemies; but should Simon torture me, as is his wont with his other victims, should he threaten death, I will laugh at his impotent rage. Never shall he force me to wed his son, and abandon my faith. Even I, a poor weak woman can follow though at a distance, in the footsteps of James the Apostle, who was thrown down from yonder temple, or of Paul, who brought the glad tidings of the Gospel to my

native city. Alas! how often have I heard my father speak of him, and of the day he blessed me and my brother as he passed the door-step where we were playing. Happy days, thrice happy indeed!" As she proceeded with this discourse, her body seemed to assume the lightness of the ambient air; the enthusiasm with which the prospect of martyrdom filled her soul, flashed from her eyes, and seemed to transfigure her now lovely countenance. Anna caught the inspiration, and springing up exclaimed, "Irene, dearest Irene, if you must suffer, let me be with you, I will die with you rather than be parted from you. What little I know of the Messiah I have learned it from you; and that little sustains me." The sound of feet on the stone stairs without interrupted the conversation; and, as Irene, with a hasty farewell, disappeared by one door, there appeared at another an elderly man of medium height, with a broad forehead and small black eyes, which were continually blinking. What his other features were like, the reader must resort to his imagination to discover; for, excepting his aquiline nose, they were hidden from view by a long white beard, that reached almost to his waist. Without ceremony this man drew a stool with his foot close to the window where Anna stood; and sitting down he motioned her to follow his example. She obeyed mechanically. For a long time there was silence, and Anna fell back into her reveries, from which a blast of the Sabbatine trumpet, which sounded on the eve of the day of rest as well as on the Sabbath itself, recalled her. She looked at him but for an instant, and then withdrew her gaze with alarm. Involuntarily her frame shook and an indefinable misery took possession of her soul. What did she read in her father's eyes? "My daughter," began the ancient, softly drawing her close to him, and kissing her, "thou seemest afraid; thou art yet too young, far too young, to taste the gall of sorrow. But the God of our fathers will not long permit the arrows of His wrath to pierce His children. His hand hath been heavy upon us all of late; but thou and I are destined for the glory of a lofty throne." As he spoke a large stone, hurled by one of the Roman engines, struck the embrasure of the window, and, splintering into fragments, filled the room with dust and broken bits of rock, one of which actually hit the ancient a severe blow on the hand. Anna leaped up to rush from the

apartment, thinking that a few more visitors of this kind would rather disturb the throne her father had just been speaking of; but the ancient, who knew that such badly-aimed shots were rare, only moved his stool back into a corner, and called on his daughter to remain. "Art thou much hurt, father?" she asked, as she now saw him rubbing the wounded hand with the other one. In her eagerness to be of service to her father, she forgot her danger, and stood directly before the window. The wound was trivial, however, and the old man, after opening and looking out of both doors of the apartment, and into a closet, before which hung a remnant of torn curtain, to assure himself that no listeners were near, proceeded with his mysterious conversation. "Dry up thy tears, my child," said he, "the God of Abraham hath called thee to be another Judith. Nay, start not, thou knowest her history, her success, her difficulties, and her glory." This man had never before shown such tenderness by word or look to this his only daughter, and she naturally felt that he had some design upon her. She was dimly conscious of this; but she listened, in order to learn what it might be. She another Judith, indeed! What did her father mean? He continued: "When Judith delivered the holy city an enemy was at the gates. Then, as now, many in the city were in despair; but our God, who guided Jacob into his inheritance, will again raise His all-powerful arm, and break the teeth of His enemies. They have dug a pit for us, and they shall fall into it themselves. How often have our people been on the eve of ruin, when ——." But here Anna, whose wonder grew apace as her father's unintelligible enthusiasm soared aloft, had arrived at that degree of suspense which must be relieved; and without apology for the interruption, she asked her father whither all this tended. "Father," said she, "I know not thy meaning, nor thy purpose. I am but a weak maid, and thou art without means ——." "Hush, child," said he, testily, the pain of his hand and her sudden interruption annoying him, "the spirit of prophecy is upon me. As Judith prospered, so shalt thou. Is Titus greater than Holofernes? Is Rome mightier than Assyria, or Vespasian more terrible than Nebuchadnezzar? Internal dissensions are already tearing the vast idolatrous fabric of the empire asunder. Like the huge crested billows that rage for a time, and submerge with merciless cru-

elty the strongest craft of the seamen, but at last spend their fury on the little sands that playfully defy them, so this great empire is speeding onward to decay ; and we, the seed of Abraham, like the sands of the sea in numbers, though weak in arms, *we* shall be the scoffers at its final overthrow." He paused, to see the effect of his words. They only mystified Anna the more, but perhaps this pleased him ; so he went on in this strain : " Simon seeks thee in marriage for his son, my child. He is potent, is rich, is valorous—is a villain, Anna added, in an undertone—and with thee his efforts and their results will be tenfold increased, and thus thou canst shed great lustre on thy family, thy tribe, thy very nation, nay, thy praises shall be sung to the uttermost ends of the earth, while history lives to record the heroic deeds of the strong women." Again he paused and stared into his daughter's eyes. She had begun to think that her parent was insane. When a father has set his heart upon a plan to advance his children, or himself through them, it is hard for him to brook opposition from them, and now this father already felt, on the threshold of his enterprise, that he was going to be resisted. " Father," said Anna, mastering her overwrought feelings, " what you say is vain—pardon the expression—the hand of God is against us." " So spake not Judith, when Israel despaired of success," he replied, sticking to his one idea. Then rising and moving cautiously to the casement, he drew her arm within his own, and pointed towards the Roman camp. " Look," said he, " see yonder the enemies of Jehovah, look," and again he pointed his withered and trembling finger in the direction of the tower of Psephinus, the eight-sided structure which protected the north-western angle of the outer wall of the city. She looked out into the dusky twilight. " There," he continued, " before that tower is the tent of Titus. How like pigmies his soldiers ; how unlike the swarming hosts of the proud Assyrian ! Child," he proceeded, in an argumentative way, " yonder army is but an ant-hill ; but even if it were multiplied an hundred fold, what success could it hope for against these triple walls ? Thou knowest their great thickness, their height, and the number of towers that flank them ; also the chasm that yawns grimly, like death itself, between the outer wall and the enemy ; and, lastly, the stout hearts that guard the defences. High above us, there,

stands the temple, with its special walls and gates, and the majesty of the God of armies dwells therein. One enemy alone we may fear, an enemy within our walls—we hunger, child, we are starving.” And from their dismal cavities, as he spoke, his sunken eyes looked out hideously upon her, and his trembling hand leaned restlessly on her arm; she shrank back from her parent as from a wraith. “The God of our fathers has often saved us,” he persisted, following her up with a strange look, half imploring, half menacing. “This once, too, He will rescue us from the breath of the whirlwind. Daughter, pity thy father—the holy city—the temple. If thou destroy this Titus, as Judith destroyed Holofernes, thou canst wed the greatest of the sons of Israel, and mayest, yes thou shalt, become the mother of the long-expected Messiah.” Here the old man, elevating in the most tragic manner his shaky hands, and clasping them above his head, raised his eyes with that artless piety which never fails the hypocrite. In this attitude he remained some seconds; then, keeping his fingers still entwined, he slowly lowered his arms, till they hung at full length before him. At the same time, his head drooped slightly to one side till his chin rested on the ephod. Properly this ornament should be worn only in the temple; but he had placed it on his breast on this occasion, evidently to impress his daughter more strongly with what he was going to impart to her.

The poor child was bewildered, stunned, and for some minutes looked vacantly before her, as if quite bereft of sense and reason alike. Could this outrageous proposition be really the voice, the command of God speaking through this priest, her father! Was she really destined to become the preserver of her country, to rival Judith in fame, to excel her by becoming the mother of the Messiah? There was always more dread than reverence in her conduct and regard for her parent; yet she was unable thus far to believe him a villain. And still she could not resist the persuasion that he was led to form this mad scheme through a selfish motive, which made him ready and willing to sacrifice his daughter on the altar of a morbid and profligate ambition. Her knowledge of Christianity did not extend much beyond the teaching that the Messiah had already come. Was her conviction regarding this fact, an awful but fascinating dream, that would one day vanish on her awakening to truth?

Or was the crucified Jesus—long since ascended—really the promised Christ, the expected of nations? At length rousing herself from these disturbing thoughts that coursed and pursued each other with mad careering through her brain, she raised her eyes to those of her father. Trembling in every limb, her face more blanched if possible than before, she essayed to address him; but the words refused to come. The priest saw these effects which his words had wrought in his daughter, and with the readiness of a schemer to believe his plans must succeed, he rashly concluded that she was ready to accept his dangerous commission. "Sit down, child," he said affectionately, as he led her back to the trivet, from which she had previously risen at his command, to view the walls and camp. "I see that thou art too weak to look upon the brilliant career in store for thee. It dazzles now; but—" "Father," interrupted the girl, with majestic emphasis—this time words rushed from her lips like a torrent, and her soul seemed to live in them—"you say truly that the God of Abraham has ever been the saviour of His people?" "Certainly, certainly, my child," answered the priest, nodding his head repeatedly to strengthen his assertion, "certainly He has, and He is and will ever be." "We read," continued Anna, "that the Jordan turned back, and that walled towns fell down at the word of the servants of the God of Israel." "Yes, yes," said her father, "and we read these words besides: 'If ye will hear My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My peculiar possession, above all people.'" "True," returned Anna, "but the Lord hath also made some threats; for we read these words addressed to our forefathers: 'The Lord will bring upon thee a nation from afar and from the uttermost parts of the earth, like an eagle that flieth swiftly, whose tongue thou canst not understand.' His prophets have complained that in spite of all the good things He gave our nation, it has been ever rebellious. Have not our scribes, and our learned priests, explained to us, that the law given by preference to the children of Abraham is only a figure of the great universal Law, to be given by another greater than Moses, the Messiah, that it is not to last for ever?" She paused for a moment as if defying contradiction, while her father, whose turn it was now to be perplexed, looked his perplexity with every feature his shaggy beard did not conceal.

He had never before heard his daughter speaking so eloquently, speaking at all in fact on such abstruse subjects, and he wondered whether she would come to the only legitimate conclusion of such an argument. However, dissembling his suspicion, he said falteringly, "But child, our God will ever remain with His people, and raise them up to rule all the nations of the earth. He has sworn never to abandon us." "Never while we remain faithful to the laws He gave us," interposed Anna, thereby reminding her father of the conditional nature of the promise. Then lowering her voice, and throwing into it all the tenderness of her gifted soul, she thus continued: "Father, our Lawgiver Moses himself told us that another greater than he should arise whom we must obey. The prophets have foretold that a new covenant should supersede the old, and another priesthood replace our own; finally that when the Christ—this lawgiver—would come, that we would reject Him, and make away with Him, and after this crime we should be abandoned to the mercy of our enemies. You know this, dear father, so much better than I; and you know that common tradition amongst us, that when we would sully our Holy temple, by slaughtering one another there, the end was soon at hand, Now, have not these things, O Father, come upon us? Are not our people everywhere down-trodden? Do not the comet seen of late and the fiery horseman we saw in the sky foretell our ruin? Has not the fountain of Siloe refused us its sweet waters—the first time in our history—and turned them over to our enemies? When did the promise that we should not be attacked in the Paschal season ever before fail us? Hath not that mysterious man, who, they say is mad, already gone about these seven years, crying woe, woe to the city, and no torture can alter his wailing? Hast thou not told us thyself, of the dread that fell upon thee and the other priests, when the brazen gate of the inner court of the holy place burst from its bolts and bars, opening of its own accord, inviting the enemy into the Temple? Did not a strange light shine around the altar at another time; and, finally did'st thou not hear that awful, mysterious voice, as of many waters, that echoed at night throughout the Temple, saying 'let us go hence?'" The very remembrance of that voice, or of her father's account of it, caused her to tremble; then burying

her tear-stained face in her hands, she sobbed aloud, and swayed to and fro on her seat. The priest was also made to feel uncomfortable by the reference to those mysterious occurrences, but he endeavored to forget them, and without any attempt to allay his daughter's emotion, savagely asked her whether, like the Nazarenes, she would accuse her people of having rejected the Messias. The chill of his voice seemed to freeze up the fountain of her tears. She felt that the time had come for professing openly, what she had for some time inwardly believed. She met his stolid gaze with a look of calm unflinching firmness, and answered. "Yes; the blood of the Messias is on our heads, we have ourselves invoked it. Jesus foretold this siege, prophesied that a stone should not be left on a stone of this Holy City. All the prophecies have been most wonderfully fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and I confess that I believe Him to be the true, the only Messias." The priest's anger had been gathering like a thunder-cloud during this, to him, appalling declaration; and if, at its close, the walls of the city had suddenly collapsed he could hardly have been more astounded. For a while he stood as if rivetted to the floor, staring with eyes that could not, save by a miracle, become more dilated, at his daughter, who after making this profession of her belief, far from being overcome with excitement consequent on the ordeal, arose and carelessly turned her eyes from her father's face, in the direction of the now moonlit battlements. It is quite possible that if armed he would have killed his perverted child at that moment, but, as it was, his passion overmastered him, and he stood still. Gradually his eyes resumed their ordinary size and shape, and his features grew into a scowl that would have been a model for a demon. When his voice came back to him, it escaped from his chest with an inarticulate shriek, or hoarse roar, such as a wounded panther would emit. Words he could not find at first, so intense was his rage; but when he did, they took the form of the vilest abuse and most savage imprecation. "Wretch," he cried, "traitress, hypocrite, apostate from the religion of thy fathers, darest thou to mention in thy father's presence the accursed name of the Nazarene, the blasphemer who made himself the Son of God—in presence of a priest of the Most High!" And he tore his garments asunder with his left hand, while his right ploughed

through his hair and beard, and scattered the silver locks upon the floor. Upon how many such scenes has the old, old moon looked down: that bland-faced moon, which smiles on the inane dialogues of lovers, or the mad antics of children, and has no frown for the foulest assassin crouching in ambush while she lights up the form of his victim, and directs the fatal blow. But how sad was Anna who stood in the flood of that silver night lamp's rays, and witnessed the fury of her unhappy father. She would have given her life to relieve him, but conscience kept her back. Was she cruel? Or was she a heroine? The Christian and the sceptic will answer these questions differently; but no matter. After his first wild paroxysm, the priest seized his daughter by the hair, and dragged her about the apartment, all the while cursing her, and even trampling upon her. How long this brutal scene might have lasted, had not a messenger knocked at the door, we cannot tell—of course he could have legally stoned her to death—so, hurriedly readjusting his garments, and kicking aside the ephod, he quitted the chamber, retaining his excited mien, in spite of his efforts to look calm, and left his half-dead child there to revive or die, he now really little cared which. When she next became conscious, she found herself on a bed, and Irene sitting beside her, bathing her brow with water. Brief explanations followed, and then those two young creatures whom the world would call weak, joined in a prayer of thanksgiving to the Crucified. They esteemed it a very high honor to be allowed to suffer a little for the sake of Him, whom Matthias the High Priest, had but just now called a blasphemer. Irene remained with her companion until she fell asleep, and then quietly glided away to seek her brother, on what business we shall see in the following chapter.



CHAPTER II.

A REJECTED LOVER.

"And therefore,—since I cannot prove a lover

* * * * *
I am determined to prove a villain,"

—*Rich. III.*

THE reader, who is familiar with the writings of Josephus, is aware that for a long time previous to Vespasian's coming as Nero's general, to besiege Jerusalem, there were frequent seditions in that unhappy city. Even while the walls were closely guarded by the legions under Titus, who succeeded his father, these faction fights, as we may designate them, went on chiefly between the two rival leaders, John who controlled the northern portion of the Holy City, and Simon who ruled in the southern and south-western districts. John was upheld by an army of twenty thousand Idumæans, who had, through treachery, gained access to the temple; while Simon was sustained by large numbers of Sicarii, or robbers, whose leader he had been before he became a power in Jerusalem. And thus, while the Romans raised a wall around the city, outside of its own walls, so as to prevent the besieged from foraging in the country round about, these two tyrants and their followers plundered the rich citizens within of their wealth, and seized upon the stores of provisions secreted by those who were lucky enough to secure them. While the sword claimed its victims, its daily sacrifice on the walls and in the trenches, the gaunt monster hunger devoured its holocausts in the streets and in the houses. So great was the suffering that men snatched the food from the mouths of their children; mothers forgot nature's ties and ate their babes. One hundred and fifteen thousand, eight hundred and eighty dead bodies, victims of hunger

were carried out of one gate during six months ; while more than six hundred thousand in all perished of famine during the entire siege. During the first month of the war the Jews made frequent and vigorous sorties, often succeeding in driving the Romans back to their own defences, and in this way they diverted their enemy's attention while they secured food in an opposite direction ; but as the siege was pressed these sallies became fewer though more furious, and were as a rule fraught with little success. Therefore the famine increased, and oftentimes whole families were found dead in their homes by neighbors who had not strength enough left to carry them out for burial.

Pressed by the state of things, Simon had resolved on another sortie : not that he hoped to secure food, but simply to divert into other channels the attention of the people, who spoke of nothing and dreamt of nothing—when they slept—but bread. He had settled the preliminaries, and was returning to his palace which was the tower Phasælus—one of the three built by King Herod—when he met and greeted Cyprian, the brother of Irene, just under the casement, where we saw her in chapter the first, standing with her cousin. “ Well met, young Greek ” was his salute to the tall, straight and slender youth who evidently did not seek nor relish this encounter. “ Have you seen your sister to-day and what answer does she deign to bestow to our proposition. ” He said this with ironical blandness. “ Methinks,” he continued, “ she will at length yield to our advances. ” As the defender of the southern portion of the beleaguered city addressed these words to Cyprian, he fixed his savage eye upon the young man who almost quailed under the look ; for Simon was a man whose steady gaze few men would face. Born in that part of the hilly country of Peræa which had centuries before been allotted by Moses to the tribe of Gad, he was inured from childhood to every kind of hardship and fatigue, and took delight in the wildest freaks of daring and wanton cruelty which his extraordinary strength and powerful frame enabled him to perpetrate with impunity. This disposition which made him at once an object of admiration or of hate throughout Peræa, Samaria and Judæa brought about him a number of followers, who, while as cruel, mischievous and daring as he, yet recognised him as their

chief by that instinctive law—common alike to man and brute—which pays homage to superior physical strength. To say that these men had all the ferocity of the more modern bandit without the tinge of gallantry—that glimmering memory of manners once acquired—which the genuine bandit is said to possess and sometimes even to parade, is not to overdraw their character. Simon, the son of Giora, allied himself with the Sicarii who had taken possession of Missada, a strongly fortified town south-east of and not far from Jerusalem; but he soon wearied of their inactivity. He collected an army twenty thousand strong and ravaged all Palestine, generally coming off victorious over all who opposed him, and especially the zealots and Idumæans. By the treachery of one Jacob, he entered the stronghold of the Idumæan territory, and took Hebron, a city that claimed a greater antiquity than Memphis, and also the exceptional distinction of having been the abode of Abraham after he had quitted Mesopotamia. Now, while Simon the Terrible was overrunning the cities of Idumæa some of his enemies got possession of his wife and took her to Jerusalem, just previous to the Roman invasion. The enraged husband followed them thither and threatened to destroy the city, unless his wife were given back unharmed. His request was through fear complied with; but his fury lasted unabated and every inhabitant of the Holy City who fell into his hands was instantly and barbarously murdered.

Within the city, at this time, and in full possession, was John of Gishala, also an adventurer, whom fortune's tide had cast with his body of zealots into supreme command of the defences. This man had been practising such cruelty on the citizens that many sought safety in flight. But no sooner did these refugees venture beyond the walls than Simon's vultures would swoop down upon them. When matters had been in this state for some months, an active conspiracy was formed in the city, led by Matthias the High Priest, with whom the reader has already had some acquaintance. He was of opinion that of the two tyrants Simon would treat the people less cruelly; and with this end in view and perhaps the prospect of personal gain by the change, he made overtures to the robber chief which ended in his admission to the city with a commission to drive out the adventurer John. The gates

were opened with much solemnity for the robber who promised to drive the Romans, already on their way hither, out of the country. Dire Nemesis, startling retribution on the people who preferred the robber Barabbas to the King of kings ! Simon did not drive out John of Gishala, but confined him to the upper city. Then he took care to secure his own despotic authority by force of arms, and treated as his worst enemies the very persons who had been most active in placing him in power. In a short time his cruelties and exactions became so oppressive as to make the people regret the harshness of the zealots and their master.

Is it surprising that Cyprian, a mere youth, should fear such a man ? Is it remarkable that Irene should dread a union with the son of such a father ? Joras was the eldest son of the tyrant, tall, gaunt and beardless with heavy features and forbidding eyes, the picture of a desperado and a worthy successor to the chief of the Sicarii. Yet this repulsive, brutal creature had a heart whose passions and affections were as strong in their way as the muscles that knotted about his giant bones. He had a heart as had his father ; and Simon who abandoned a siege on the eve of success, to recover the woman he loved, who so many years before had borne him this uncouth boy, would fondle the child in his rough hands, allow it to strike him in the face, and kiss its childish tears away, after a day spent in the defences, or in shedding the innocent blood of many another parent's offspring. Fathomless, devoted, unselfish but ever admirable is the paternal instinct, whether we find it in the refined homes of the civilized man or in the unpolished breast of the illiterate barbarian ! Now when Joras first saw Irene, a strange feeling took hold of him, and blinded him, and made him deaf and mute and stupid all at once. In a word he fell deeply and unpardonably in love with the polished young Corinthian lady. A moment before he saw her he was burning with the desire of killing some one who he thought had slighted him ; but the next he was willing to go in quest of his enemy and embrace him. This was of course all very foolish and stupid ; but who is going to explain the nature of love especially in the breast of a savage ? The savage is a child ; and the child must have what he sets his heart on or he will cry and repine till he is indulged. To love Irene was to seek

her hand in marriage. Joras had had some day dreams of an ambitious kind. He was not sure that the Romans would not yet tire of the siege, and leave his father in possession of the city. Then he could turn his attention to the complete expulsion of John of Gishala, and in course of time, he would succeed [as] king to his warrior sire's [throne. But how nice it would be to have a lovely lady for his bride, and so honorable—he knew nothing of Irene, but in the light of his love he knew she must be a true princess—and some day he would have a court equal to Solomon's. He had a vague idea that Solomon was a great king. And so on, and so on, hour after hour, he dreamt himself into a fairy land of bliss and beauty, in which Irene was always the central figure. It never occurred to him, however, that the lady had a will. Such a thing was unrecognised in those lands. No one ever heard of a woman's refusing marriage. So he proposed. Alas for his happiness, Irene was not to be won by a simple proposal; and moreover, he began to fear that she was seeking pretexts for avoiding his presence. During the siege by the Romans which followed soon after the events recorded above young Joras formed the acquaintance of Cyprian, and hoped through her brother to reach the heart of the coy lady. Rough and uncouth as were his manners, it was easy to see that the tender passion had on him, as on more civilized beings, a softening influence. It had not yet come into his head to force the object of his affections into acquiescence. Accordingly he wasted on Cyprian much attention, and at length introduced him to his father, recommending him at the same time, to a position of command in the army of defence.

Strange as it may appear in one so callous to human sentiment, Simon espoused his son's cause with all the ardor of a young swain; and when, notwithstanding the importunities of the lover, and the qualified pressure brought to bear on her by her brother—he acted out of fear of the tyrant—Irene still stood aloof, and in the only interview she deigned to give the suitor, abruptly told him never to speak to her again on the subject, the tyrant became furious, and threatened to strangle her, or throw her headless body over the wall, if within three days she would not come in person and supplicate pardon. "How impudent of her," he said, "to toy with the affections

of Simon's son. She shall kneel here before me," he roared, "and beg to be added to the number of my slaves." Like all *parvenus* he was extremely sensitive about his newly acquired dignity, and he felt the slight put upon him by Irene's refusal to wed his son; felt it in his very soul, and was ready to use his power to resent it. Simon had of late remarked, that the usually prompt and frolicsome Joras was moody and mopish, and was continually making blunders. He did not know, nor suspect the cause of it, till his son unbosomed himself to him. These two were now each other's only confidants, so little did the wily Simon trust to his followers, whose motives and habits he judged very properly by the standard of his own. He was vexed because his son had allowed his heart to wander so indiscreetly, and chaffed him about it mercilessly; but he well knew all the while that he was wasting his time, and so ended by joining in the crusade against her Corinthian insolence. It was already evening of the second day given her to reflect, when the meeting described in the opening chapter occurred, between the tyrant and Cyprian. "Methinks she will yield to our advances," he repeated still looking savagely at Cyprian. As the young man hesitated, the tyrant put the question directly as to whether Irene had changed her mind. Mildly, tearfully, her brother answered that she was prepared to die rather than yield. "She dies then," he roared, "to-morrow night, mark—she has still a few more hours to undo her rash act—and by Heavens! no woman ever resisted me before. If she yields not, she shall languish in a dungeon. No! she shall not die to-morrow; for every ignominy that she shrinks from, shall be heaped upon her before sweet death shall come to end her sufferings. Dost hear, Greek? Go tell her, quick, or thy head shall answer for thy tardiness." Thus ended the encounter; and as the monster abruptly turned to depart, he shot one more glance of his protruding eyes at the young man that entirely crushed him. Simon dashed away, his right hand grasping his sword hilt, his left clenched and occasionally uplifted above his head and shaken menacingly, as if to give more force to some heavy imprecation. Meanwhile Cyprian stood like one paralysed, with his chin drooping on his breast. He turned to leave when ordered by the tyrant, but his head swam, the light went out from his eyes, he staggered and was

about to fall, when, with a sudden half-unconscious grasp, he seized a balluster of the broad staircase near by, and swung round against it for support. During the last part of the tyrant's discourse his tongue clove to his palate, he could find no word to utter, and even if he could have spoken, he could say nothing that would appease the robber, or avert the fate that hung over his sister's head. He might have remained thus for hours, if Irene after leaving the bedside of Anna, and gaining the street, had not seen his spectral form, and recognised her brother. With a suppressed scream she rushed to his side, and took hold of his hands, which hung down cold and nerveless before him.

Her touch recalled his absent spirit, and in another minute brother and sister were hurrying on together down the narrow streets, in the direction of a densely-wooded grove, that loomed up amid the moonlit, white marble dwellings, like a dark cloud in winter on the lunar disc. At length they arrived at the place of rendezvous upon which they had agreed in the morning, not then foreseeing that they would reach it together by the light of the moon. Still they pressed on at the same rapid pace, till they reached a spot where, on account of the thickness of the foliage, no ray of moonlight could penetrate; then, breathless and panting, sat down on the withered moss-clad trunk of a fallen oak. Cyprian opened the conversation. Heaving a deep sigh, in order to lighten somewhat his heavy burden, he related the details of the interview he had with Simon, and the final threat. Cyprian was in doubt whether he ought so to offend his sister's delicacy as to tell her all, but it was better she should know exactly what were the intentions of her persecutors. "You can save yourself all this by yielding and marrying Joras," said Cyprian, faintly, and hardly daring to utter such a sentiment, "he is rich and powerful, and he loves you. It will kill me to think what you are suffering, if you fall into his father's hands." Irene listened with calm attention, only shuddering when he made mention of the prison, into which she knew criminals were thrown without respect to age, or rank, or sex. She looked forward to death as a happy release from the cares of a life which seemed to lengthen, and become less capable of endurance with each fresh accumulation of misfortune. But the prison! where death might be outrun by vice, and arrive

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only in time to remove the shattered fragments of a vessel, from which the fragrant odour of virtue had long since departed. It was horrible. As if an icy wind had swept her youthful frame, her teeth chattered, and she clung in speechless anguish to her brother's arm. At last she muttered, "He is not a Christian; come prison, come death, I will not red one who is not of our faith." Cyprian drew her to him, and kissed her. "You are a martyr," he said, and his voice choked with a sob. But he knew there was no time to be lost in giving vent to feeling, whatever consolation it might for the moment impart; and, mastering himself after a long and doubtful struggle, he shook himself free from his sister's vice-like grip, and, springing up, addressed her in this way. "My dear sister, if we put our trust in God, He will not leave us orphans. The lion was terrible-looking to Samson, but God saved him, and he found a honeycomb in its mouth. We are now dealing with a lion, and a like issue will come of the fight." His words quieted Irene, who had always put her trust in God, and prepared her to take counsel as to the best means of escape from her impending danger. First they debated the possibility of successfully bribing the guards to allow them both to climb over the walls. Then they recollected that the Romans were putting to the sword all such fugitives. Of course they were Greeks, and would, doubtless, if their word were taken, be spared the fate of Hebrews, but this was only a chance, a great risk. However, this was the night for the sortie! "That upsets everything," said Cyprian, with a sigh, when he adverted to it: "I can, I must go out with the soldiers, to attack the enemy in their works; but you, Irene, you cannot accompany us, and even if you should do so, and attempt to cross over to the other side, you would be most certainly slain." "I would rather," said Irene, with passionate energy, and clasping her hands on her breast. "I would rather fall into the hands of the Roman troops, and meet certain death, than into Simon's, to rot in his dungeons. O, my brother," she continued, throwing her arms about his neck, "let us go out. Let me accompany you with the soldiers; and if die we must, let us die together." For a while they were silent. The alternative Irene had chosen was, doubtless, desperate, but perfectly natural, and her brother interposed no objection: but she was

not destined, chaste soul, to escape from the web woven around her by that wily and brutal Simon.

The sortie was fixed for the hour of midnight. Might not the tyrant, in the haste and anxiety of the preparations, forget such a trifle as the imprisonment of a woman. Even if he would remember this trifle, could not her brother rescue her, and convey her to a hiding place without the walls, amid the confusion usually attending these frequent sallies? Thus they mused in silence, the current of their thoughts running on with lightning rapidity, and the most difficult and intricate plans, brightened by the light of their hopes, seemed easy of accomplishment. In a word, they concluded—at least Irene did—that they were quite safe indeed, already, so to speak, out of danger. Suddenly the oppression of the darkness, and the silence of the wood, stole upon them, and the dismal hooting of an owl, sent a shudder to their quick-beating hearts, that for an instant left them breathless. The moon had disappeared behind a long heavy mass of sable clouds, thus intensifying the gloom into something like palpable darkness, and the heavy dew-drops fell upon the dry leaves, at inconstant intervals, from the drooping boughs above and around them. It was time to return home.

They had hardly made a dozen steps in that direction, when a hideous laugh, at no great distance, once more made them pause, and seemed to freeze the very blood in their veins. Who has not, some time in his life, experienced this sickening feeling? Who that has felt his little scheme or secret to be unveiled at the very moment when he supposed it buried deepest and for ever from the light, and out of the sight and hearing of men, has ever forgotten the feeling of consternation that took possession of him upon making the discovery? Picture then, dear reader, if you can, the acute suffering of Cyprian, and the withering anguish of Irene, when they thought that their plans were overheard by some one who would perhaps divulge them. Such moments are trying; and it may be that the pain compressed into them is as great as that of death itself—perhaps even greater. Making the sign of the cross, as the early Christians were taught to do on all occasions of danger or importance, Cyprian and his sister stood still, not daring to move a step lest that by so doing they would fall into the hands of

enemies. Irene nestled closer to her brother, when the first laugh was followed in a few seconds—it seemed an age to them—by another and a third, which echoed and re-echoed weirdly through the copse, and died away slowly on the thickening air. Then there was an ominous rustling of broken branches, a crumpling of withered leaves and bark, as slow and heavy footsteps—of whom they knew not—pressed the soil, and a sepulchral voice, which seemed to be wafted on slimy wings, and beat their ears with a sticky sensation, wailed out in the darkness, “Woe, woe to the city; woe, woe to the Holy Place.” It was then, and only then, that the woman paid her tribute to fear in a subdued scream; but tragic as the words were which the hidden voice had uttered, they relieved the listeners from an awful suspense that might have proved fatal to Irene. As it was she breathed freely at once, and, alternating with her brother, in a low voice, the petitions of the Lord’s Prayer, continued her journey homeward.

Does it seem strange that Irene recovered so quickly? A word will unfold the reason. The owner of the mysterious voice was a man named Jesus, who had, as Anna reminded her father, gone about during seven years crying out, by day and by night, these self-same words, notwithstanding the Jews tried by violence to restrain him. At last, one day towards the close of the siege, he was struck by a stone from a Roman *balista*, and hurled from the wall, exclaiming, “woe to myself.” The Jews dreaded this man, although they looked on him for the most part as insane, as doubtless he was; but the peculiarity of his warning cry was not on this account less mysterious, and taken in connection with other untoward happenings about this same period, in and about Jerusalem, it certainly possessed a weight which it would be inconsistent with Jewish character not to heed. The Christians, on the other hand, far from dreading him, regarded this man, mad or not, as another Noah warning the people of the coming destruction, foretold forty years previously by our Lord. As many of them as could, therefore, migrated from the city at various times, from the commencement of the reign of anarchy there until the coming of the Roman legions. While in the city, many of the Christians, converts for the most part from Judaism, frequented the temple and kept up many observances of the Old Law, to the detriment in some

cases of their faith, and the annoyance of the Gentile converts ; many of them strove hard to effect a compromise between the Old and the New Dispensations, and while they clung tenaciously enough to belief in Jesus as the Messiah, wished to enforce on all men the peculiar rites and ceremonies of Judaism. Now the time was come to choose one side or the other, and, with the exception of a few, the believers in Christ removed to the little town of Pella, a considerable distance from the doomed city. Here they settled, and watched with interest, not unmixed with awe, the progress of the siege, and in the midst of hostile neighbours, "Jewish and Barbarian," they established their colony, in which no one owned any property, and every one worked for the good of the community. All property was held in trust, and the poor were fed from the abundance of the rich, who, upon their conversion, gave up to the Deacons the administration of their wealth.

To return to our young friends. When Irene and her brother emerged from the wood, the moon once more stole fitful glances at them from behind the dark fleece-trimmed clouds that shot across her surface. Thus their way was alternately hidden and revealed by the flying lamp in the firmament. As they entered the porch of Matthias' palace a flambeau shot forth a red glare into the darkness from the top of the tower, named Mariamne, near the gate of the Essenes ; it was the signal for the troops, who were to open the gates and rush out upon the besiegers. When it disappeared there could be heard the subdued tramp of many feet ; not regular, like that of a well-trained body, but confused, for no regular discipline was observed by the defenders of the city. No matter how quietly each one of a large number of men may tread on a stony walk the combined effect is very loud, and resembles the falling of water in the distance from a great height. But there was no sound of voices, no shouting, no whispering ; this was forbidden under penalty of death. Here and there, however, a torch made a faint momentary impression on the gloom and disappeared—this was but seldom. The men massed themselves in the street and the square, near the gate from which the sortie was to be made—they were about five hundred in number—and awaited the opening of the trellis and the removal of the barricade. Now, just as everything was in readiness for the

attack, an event occurred which would have been most favorable to the besieged, perhaps have changed the event of the war if its nature had not been misunderstood. As it was, it caused the sortie to be postponed; and an opportunity, one of those so rare in the fortune of war, was lost beyond hope of recovery. In order to approach the walls encompassing the city, it was necessary to fill up the valleys or moats with banks constructed of earth and trunks of trees, which were cut down and hauled from a distance of twelve to fifteen miles. In this manner an inclined way was made from the Roman camp to the foundations, almost, of the city walls. On the trend of this embankment were placed the balistæ, or engines for casting large stones, and the battering rams—a name given to enormous beams fitted on one end with an iron head, swung in the centre from a derrick-shaped frame, and worked with destructive force against the walls by men covered with a *testudo*, that is a row of shields. As the Jews, from their advantageous position on the walls, hurled down darts and stones upon the Romans, who worked these machines and wrought great havoc among them, Titus, with strategic foresight constructed lofty towers, sheathed on the outside with iron, and had them moved so near the walls as to overlook them. In these towers he placed a number of men who, from little windows near the top, while themselves perfectly protected, hurled javelins at the Jews, who sought to attack or beat off the legions working the battering-rams. This premised, we come to the accident which disturbed Simon's plans. The Roman troops, fatigued by the labours of the day, were enjoying the sweet repose that nature refuses to the idler, but pours upon the brows of those who toil, when all at once a rumbling sound, followed by a terrific crash, brought every man to his feet, and every hand to a sword-hilt. Within and without the walls that awful sound was heard reverberating far over the hills and plains, but the darkness forbade successful inquiry into the real cause. A superstitious dread fell upon both Jews and Gentiles. The former, who could have availed themselves of the dismay of their enemies to annihilate them, retreated silently to their quarters, not daring to look back lest the fate of Lot's wife should overtake them; while the Romans passed the watchword from one to another, to ensure the presence of friends, or

detect that of enemies. They clamored around the tents of the centurions, their officers, who in turn entreated Titus to offer an explanation. The general soon discovered the cause of their fright. Going about the wall, he found that one of his best-built towers, the masterpiece of months of engineering had suddenly collapsed and gone to pieces—how, he could not tell. He quieted the disorder and calmed the fears of the cohorts, appearing among them in person; but suspecting a Jewish ambush, he doubled the guards and retired to his tent; and while regretting the partial failure of his plans, thanked his favorite Apollo that the loss was far from irreparable.

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CHAPTER III.

WITHIN THE WALLS.

MORNING broke with a gleeful smile on the raging bosom of the Icarian Sea, imparting to the rock-bound coast of Cos a reflection of its gladness, and the young sunlight danced with fairy-like steps upon the snowy crests of the bounding waters. High above the angry surf, in a pleasant grove, the dewy leaves of the date and fig-tree greeted their king, and the rosebud oped its fragrant lips to speak its homage to the god of day. In that grove an empress sat, whose realm was a human heart. Yet a night cloud sat on her fair brow, and its weight smote a chill into her soul. Suddenly her eyes which had been watching the heave and clanging of the waves as they broke heavy and vanquished on the crags beneath, fastened on a white speck away in the offing. It was a sail. How her heart leaped and her breath came short and fast as it approached; for she knew it brought him for whom she was waiting. It grew rapidly in size; it luffed, it jibed and tacked, now half-hidden, now skimming aloft on billowy wings. A form appears on the deck, it waves a signal, and the craft reaches a little bay where a wooded peninsula hides it from her sight. In another moment she is in her lover's presence. The night cloud of suspense falls from her brows; the sun of her joy has risen. Three months before this, a merchant's bark was dashed to ruin on this coast. A single victim reached the shore alive and sank exhausted and senseless on the sand. A Jewish maiden, whose father dwelt hard by, discovered him, revived him, nursed him and, as is usual in such cases, loved him. He was a Greek and a Christian, and one of the first disciples of St. Paul; but he returned the love of his benefactress and avowed it. Her father, a rich and

proud old Pharisee, would not hear of the alliance, and the lovers parted in tears. He promised to return to the island in three months with a new ship to take her back with him to his home in Corinth. Every day during those long months the maid visited the spot where last they parted, and taking a jewelled ring, the pledge of his love, from her bosom—she durst not wear it on her finger—she would kiss it, and with a prayer for *his* safety tenderly replace it.

The time for his return was up ; and from the stern rocks the maiden looked in vain for a sail. Three days more had passed and still he was not come. As she gazed on the changing tide a pang shot through her soul ; it was momentary, but few such would kill. Her love altered not : would his ever change ? She shuddered and put away the phantom. It is perhaps unnecessary to say that she fancied him often dying on some other island shore, as she once found him, or at the bottom of the voracious deep. Such thoughts will rise up unbidden. On the fourth day, which he was overdue, she went forth to watch for her beloved and he came. We saw him landing. Another month, and a young Greek merchant Xanthus by name and Rebecca a Jewish maid of Cos stood before the Christian hymeneal altar in Corinth and mutually pledged their vows of love and fidelity. These events happened twenty years before the date at which our story opens. Their union was blessed with several boys, the eldest of whom they called Cyprian—the reader has already made his acquaintance—and when, five years later, spring came laughing through the woods, babbling in the brooks and conjuring from the moistened earth its hidden floral treasures, Rebecca presented to the rejoicing Xanthus a flower more beautiful, more delicate than ever graced the verdant meadows ; and he named the flower Irene. During the persecution of the Christians by Nero, Xanthus who never had in him the material of which martyrs are made, fled his native country and wandered from city to city, during many years in Asia Minor, in Palestine and in Egypt. Returning from Alexandria with his wife and his only living children Cyprian and Irene, a great longing came over Rebecca to visit the Holy City. Never before had Xanthus opposed the wishes of his wife ; this one he did resist, but only for a time. The Romans were already hastening to invest the city and on every side there was

sedition, robbery and murder. It was therefore perilous to be abroad, and Xanthus tried to impress the fact on Rebecca. She wished to visit the Holy Sepulchre and to see her uncle. With a strange feeling, an undefinable apprehension of some calamity soon about to fall upon him, he yielded to her desires and visited Jerusalem. Soon she discovered the High Priest Matthias, her paternal uncle, and presented her husband and children. Their stay was necessarily a short one; and a few days before their intended departure, as they walked leisurely before the temple, one of the seditious upheavings so numerous at this time in Jerusalem, broke about them like a thunder cloud. Xanthus was struck down at his wife's side, the blow that felled him first mortally wounding her. The bodies of the fallen were thrown without the gates, the dying and the dead together in a promiscuous heap. The children, now practically orphans, were adopted by their uncle, and after the usual seven days mourning for the dead allowed to mix without restraint in society. As the siege had now commenced in earnest, Cyprian found it impossible to leave the city, though he wished to return to Corinth to claim his father's estate. After this digression, which was necessary to explain the relationship of Anna and Irene, and to account for Cyprian's presence in Jerusalem, let us return to the subject proper.

The sun had risen; his rays first kissed the drooping leaves and swaying branches of the trees that fringed the Mount of Olives, then flashed joyously upon the snow-white pillars of the temple and the golden plates of the façade, kindling up the majestic pile with a dazzling fiery splendor which blinded the eye and seemed like a vision of Jehovah's throne. It was the day appointed for the sacrifice of Irene to a tyrant's malice. Who that looked upon the glorious sunrise would believe such days were made for deeds of blackness, and yet how many such will be wrought before that sun goes down? From early dawn the industrious Romans had been engaged with pick, spade and axe clearing away the debris of the fallen tower and making preparations for the erection of another on a firmer foundation. In the city, on the contrary, all was dull and listless, and the lazy soldiers lolled about on the defences, throwing dice, singing ditties, telling tales, anything and everything to while away the time, which they well knew was hastening them to

to the end. No one seemed to notice the chance that was lost the previous night, and no one seemed to care much either—save Simon, who sat moodily in his room all the morning. "Ben," said a huge and only half-clad fellow, addressing a sleepy comrade, "I'll bet you we shall drop into the caves before the moon of Elul loses her horns." "Why in the caves?" queried the other rubbing his eyes and averting them from the rays of a July sun. "Well, Gorgas says he overheard Simon swear by God—and he doesn't believe in one." "What did he swear," said the other yawning, "that's what I want to hear." "Don't interrupt me and I'll tell you, you dog," replied Ben, drawing his knees up to his chin and clasping his hands around them. "He swore he would go into the monuments and dig his way out, so as not to fall into the hands of Titus, once the legions should get into the lower city." "Don't believe it," answered Ben laconically, "I'll wager you fifty shekels Simon will die game, and fifty more that we'll hold out three months." "Taken," said the giant, as he stretched himself in the sun, and made a wicked thrust with his dagger at a big fly that buzzed provokingly around his ears. This proceeding seemed to amuse the fly which buzzed louder than before, and the soldiers, who set up a jeering laugh at the expense of the now languid and growling gambler. Gorgas came up on the instant and was appealed to by half a dozen voices at once to verify or deny the statement of Gad. "He told the truth," said he, and forthwith began to relate his own experience of Josephus at Jotapata, and to rail at the cowardice of leaders in bulk when Simon himself was seen approaching. The conversation was quickly changed into another channel as the tyrant drew near, for the men well knew his vindictive nature. "Gorgas," said he, addressing that decrrier of superiors, "go to the house of Matthias at noon and bring me a young wolf they call Irene. If the priest objects, bring him too. I don't like him anyway. Mark, if Irene escapes," he went on, raising his harsh voice, "I'll flay thee and then roast thee, dost thou hear?" Gorgas heard, and he knew that Simon always meant what he said; so with a timid look and bow he replied that he heard and the tyrant passed on. "A nice commission that Gorg," said Dan, whose voluptuous lips, more than his watery eyes, told what was passing in his mind.

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“She is a Corinthian, that Irene,” put in Gad, who was aware of the infamous morals of the Corinthians. “She is a Christian,” retorted Gorgas, who was, perhaps, angry at the fact, “and among them immorality is unheard of. Simon may kill her, but she will look upon death as a glorious martyrdom.” “You’ll look odd when you’ll be roasted, Gorgas,” said a soldier with only one eye, who retreated behind a pillar as he said it, followed by an angry look and an oath from the officer. “Well, tell us about Josephus,” said Dan, who thought more of winning a mina than a dozen women; “go on, and never mind that one-eyed idiot.” “As I was saying then,” replied Gorgas, “these men are all cowards. They fight when they can’t help it; they make others do the work and they take the credit; they torture poor women—like enough Simon will flay and roast this Irene.” “And you with her,” said One-eye behind the pillar. “Then they’ll skulk away and hide when all is lost.” “True, true,” cried all in chorus. “You all know,” resumed Gorgas, “how Josephus was appointed by the nation to defend Galilee and how he held Jotapata against Vespasian’s best troops.” They nodded affirmatively. He continued, “Josephus managed things well for a long time; he provided water and fodder by covering men with sheepskins.”—“What will he cover you with,” said the persistent joker again, peeping out from behind the column? “You’ll—” But he didn’t finish the sentence, for half-a-dozen daggers laid him low on the instant; when, as if nothing had happened, Gorgas went on with his narrative. “He had them covered with skins and sent them outside the walls towards the fountains. The legions mistaking them for grazing sheep left them to do their work unmolested. When he wished to build the walls higher, he protected his men from the stones and darts of the Romans, by hanging in front of them fresh hides which caught the missiles or lessened their force. When the rams began to play upon the walls—poor walls they were too—not like these with their solid ten foot marble blocks,” and he nodded toward the high rampart, “he let down bags of chaff which deadened the blows, and poured down boiling oil upon those who came up with scaling ladders. At length there were so few left in the city—there were some killed every day—that the same men had to fight by day and watch by night, and the guards

overcome with sleep and hunger usually fell asleep at their posts." "It was a brave defence," said several together. "Brave if you like," replied Gorgas, "but who made it?" "Aye, aye, that's it," shouted the hearers. "We made it, the soldiers made it, not the leader, who only urged them, urged them uselessly as he knew from the start. At last a deserter told Vespasian of the condition of things with us, and Titus, who now blocks us in, Sabinus, and some few others, acting on the suggestion of the traitor came into the sleeping city with a handful of troops. By Esau's hair! comrades," and Gorgas struck the pavement with his heel, "if Josephus was a man, even then, he could have vanquished them." "He was a coward," said a number in chorus. "But he hid himself (Gorgas did not mind the interruption) yes, he hid in a cave with a few faithful followers—faithful to him—until an old hag found him out and betrayed him." "A precious hag," said Gad, "she deserved a reward." "Why could he not die like a man?" said the others. "No, he got off free, how was that? and is now an honorable man, a guest of the Emperor's son!" "It was but yesterday," said Dan, "that he came up here to the very walls asking us to follow his cowardly example and surrender before it would be too late." Here the others shook their fists or their daggers menacingly, and one expressed a wish to be able to reach Josephus on some such occasion and "bleed him." "Simon will prove another Josephus," explained Gorgas, "and fifty at least of your shekels, Ben, will change hands." All laughed save Ben, who griped hard his scrip, saying merely, "I stick to my wager," and producing a dice box, rattled it vigorously and challenged the crowd to play for two oboli a throw. Gorgas, shading his eyes with his hand and looking at the sun, got up hastily from the pedestal of a fluted granite column on which he was sitting and strolled away, keeping close to the houses which lined the narrow streets, and wondering if he would escape, with his hide intact, from the hands of Simon. It was nearly noon, and he bent his way towards the home of Irene, whose name lingered in his mind since he had heard it, with the melancholy sweetness of a half-forgotten melody, and, contrary to its signification, destroyed his peace of mind.*

*The Greek word Irene means peace.

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"Thy name is Peace," he murmured, "yet it banishes peace from me. I would do much to save thee ; but I must not lose my hide and be roasted for the benefit of his majesty Simon, son of Giora !" So hastening his steps, he sped on his awkward errand.



CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST OF THE HIGH PRIESTS.

"O wretch, without a tear, without a thought,
Save joy above the ruin that thou hast wrought—
The time shall come, nor long remote, when thou
Shalt feel far more than thou afflictest now ;
Feel for thy vile self-loving self in vain,
And turn thee howling in unpitied pain."—*Byron.*

THE reader will remember that just as the High Priest Matthias was maltreating his daughter for professing her belief that Jesus was the Messias, a messenger summoned him away. Doffing his ephod and buckling on a short sword, he quitted the house straightway, all the while heaping curses, in a low voice, on his recreant offspring. "She has learned this infamy from her cousins !" thought he, "and—I will make away with them." But he feared the consequences of open action. He knew of the love borne Irene by the young Jofas ; but he was not aware of the terrible alternative offered her in case she refused to marry him. He fell then to plotting how he could most securely rid himself of her and her brother ; and resolved to favor the suit of Simon's son with his authority as the lady's uncle. "I thought he would wed my daughter," said the schemer, half aloud, "but that failing he shall have my niece. In any event I shall profit," and he laughed into his grizzly beard. "If he is to reign for only another day—and that will be the most of it if my plans succeed—he shall have Irene, and when he falls, I can deal with her unscathed. She has turned my child's head already, curse her Abraham ! and they must be separated." Occupied with these thoughts he reached the house of Macarias, a wealthy citizen, who dwelt near Helen's monuments. In the vestibule he met a dozen others, all formerly men of wealth and worth, conversing in.

low tones and looking watchful and nervous as men do when they have on hand something difficult or dangerous of execution, and are apprehensive of ill success or fearful of betrayal. They advanced across the peristyle and entered the dining-hall on the left. The room was large. Its walls and floor were of polished marble of various hues, its ceiling of citron wood also highly polished and carved, but having marks of recent vandalism, the many rents and scratches showing where the gold and ivory had once been inlaid. In the centre of the room stood an uncovered marble-topped semi circular table, around which, reaching from one end to the other on the convex side, was a low form of carved cedar, with here and there a shred of damask hanging from it (held by a broken nail), a relic of what upholstery was there, before tyrants had stripped the rich of their wealth and the poor of their food. On the table were a few wooden dishes, several amphoræ filled with water, not as of old with wine, a few small loaves of blackish bread, and some olives and figs. Certainly no Spartan, fresh from the Phiditia, would envy the board of the once rich Macarias. Ceremonies were laid aside, except that the priest washed his hands before seating himself, reclining rather, to the frugal meal. The meal began and progressed in silence, none, not even the host, being willing to speak. There were present men of various ages, seemingly, from twenty-five to fifty; but all prematurely pinched, wrinkled and gray-haired, so that the difference of their ages could with difficulty be noted. The repast ended, the doors were shut, and a watch set to guard against intruders. The High Priest was first to speak. "Fellow men," he began in a low and husky voice, "sufferers like myself for our country, I have braved the danger of inviting you to-day to consider some plan of freeing ourselves from the tyrant, who alone now opposes a strong barrier to our peace. It were unsafe to meet at my house," he continued, choking down an affected sob, and looking around the board to note the effect of his words—"hence I asked and obtained permission of our host the good Macarias (with a bow towards that individual) to hold our convention in this dwelling. We were all once well off (another sob); now we are poor. Simon first took our city—fools that we were to invite him into it—now he has taken our substance. My desire is to save our city and

our temple, the abode of the God of Abraham"—here all bowed reverently—"and all else failing, I believe the Romans themselves will preserve it and us, if we open our gates to them. They have often offered us, during this siege, the right hand of fellowship, and only yesterday Titus sent our countryman, Josephus, to the walls, to assure us of his good will; but if we resist further, and we must, if we—continue—to—obey—Simon" (his voice dropped into the lowest audible key) "O God of our fathers! I fear to think of the consequences. I had even hoped some miraculous delivery was at hand—some new Judith"—here his utterance became choked, and it was some time before he was able to proceed—"even till this very evening; but now my hopes are faint, and my soul withers away like the mown grass within me, with apprehension. And yet I know the Most High will save His own. Therefore, O my friends united by misfortune and a common hope, like David's followers, when the arms of Saul flashed above their heads, let us go forth and gather our people, and call on Him whose arm is strengthened against us, to turn it upon our enemy: let us invite the Cæsar within our walls." He sat down, that crafty priest, who sought himself first in all he did; but the big tears that moistened the furrows of his cheeks and trickled down to lose themselves in the wilderness of his beard, made all present, save one, believe that the purest patriotism consumed his soul. The one excepted was Macarias, their host; but when he rose to speak, his dissimulation was as perfect as that of Matthias. He urged the claims of God, of the temple, of the nation, and of the city, and gave his vote to pass the watchword round that very night, and at noon on the morrow to assemble and throw open the gates to the Romans. "As well," said he, "may we die in the attempt to benefit our country, as to wait and die like cravens at the hands of the victors, or, what is worse, be carried away into slavery." He was a diplomatist; so purely unselfish was the sentiment conveyed in his last sentence, that every man present sprang to his feet, and throwing caution to the winds, cheered the speaker to the echo. The conspirators agree on a password, the work is to begin at once, and at noon to-morrow the city will be saved. And Simon? They dispersed singly, or in twos, in order to avoid suspicion; for Simon had his minions everywhere, and so had John of

Gishala. When the priest came out into the street, his brow was hot and his throat parching from over-excitement. He stumbled against something that lay directly in his path, and shuddered as he stooped to find it was a corpse. He would be defiled if he touched it, so he went round it and hurried on. Was it an omen? He had not time to reflect, he hurried on. As he turned into the street leading to his own house, the stars were up and the moon raced through the silver-edged clouds. His daughter was peacefully slumbering in her room, and his nephew and niece were plotting in the grove yonder, to baffle the wickedness of the same tyrant whom he had been conspiring to overthrow. What a world for plotting is this! Perhaps Simon was engaged maturing a plot too at this hour; and Titus and every one of his subordinates, one or more plots each. But which, or how many of them will issue just as the conspirators wish? Happy are they who predict their own success. How few men or women in the world weigh the difficulties of an undertaking in which they have determined to embark? The bright side is with them ever uppermost, the sea of their enterprise is to their vision without a wave, a quicksand, or a lurking crag. The sheen of the success, which they already lay hold of by anticipation, so blinds them that they cannot see the vortex of failure, yawning to receive and anxious to submerge them. As Matthias entered his bed-chamber and threw himself upon his couch he chuckled. "I brought in Simon," he said to himself, "to crush John, and thus to elevate myself. It failed. I sought to make my daughter a Judith—the sight of her would perplex, defeat the enemy—and I would be honored as the father of my country, the savior of the city, that failed too. My nephew and his sister were the obstacle there. But now, by Aaron's rod! (he actually swore thus) I will succeed. The Romans shall enter to-morrow, and I rule in Jerusalem. Ah, Simon, said he aloud, "you despise the man who made you what you are, ungrateful dog; but to-morrow I'll trample you under my feet." And the High Priest so forgot far his unapproachable dignity as to leap up and dance round the room, cutting the awkwardest possible figure. Then suddenly recollecting himself, through force of habit, he lay down again as demurely as if he had been caught, by a crowd of people, executing his gyrations. But his thoughts

ran on in the same vein, till sleep put an end to his waking fancies, and replaced them with dreams full of hideous forms and oppressive ogres. First he dreamt of armies plodding through a soil wet with rain and human blood, dragging with them waggons laden with provisions, for the relief of the besieged. How his palate itched as he beheld the viands, and smelt the gladdening wine. As they approached the gates, John of Gishala, clad in priestly robes and wearing a crown of gold, rushed down from the steps of the temple and attacked those who were about to open the gates. As he neared them he slipped on the marble walk, fell and was stunned, and Matthias, striking him a heavy blow with a broken spade, took away his golden crown to place it on his own head. Then with the usual protean variation characteristic of dreams the soldiers had vanished, or become oxen, approaching the altar for sacrifice. The fires were in order, but he could not find the sacrificial knife; and when it was at last brought to him, instead of the ox he was about to strike, his daughter Anna stood before him; he had himself been metamorphosed into Abraham, and Simon was hastening towards him, a menace overspreading his countenance. He turned and fled from the temple, but was met and held by Macarias. Again he dreamt that he stood on the outer wall of the city, brandishing a sword and eloquently haranguing the multitude which stood bare-headed in the sun, hanging reverently on the words of his lips, and ever and anon hailing him as the High Priest who had saved his country and the Holy City. All at once a great wind arose, and blew him head-long down into the brook of Cedron; but so deep was it that it seemed he would never reach the bottom. Again all was changed. He was seated on the temple, no longer a man but an angel, the guardian of the city and the temple. John of Gishala and Simon of Gerasa were lying dead, on the pavement in the shape of dogs; the people knelt before him, and even the Roman legions were prostrate in his presence. Suddenly a flash of lightning appeared in the north, and began to circle the heavens like a monstrous serpent. Its length became greater every instant until its coils were numberless. Then the coils began to grow rapidly narrow and narrower, and to approach him. The head of the fiery serpent assumed a human face: it was the dreaded Simon's. A terrific clap of

thunder shook the city like an earthquake, the serpent coiled himself about the angel, and Matthias fell from the roof of the temple.

Bathed in a cold perspiration and trembling in every limb, the High Priest awoke to find himself on the floor and to hear muffled voices throughout the house. The night lamp was extinguished and darkness reigned within and without. Every one was awake; the vestibules and streets were filled with anxious groups of people, fruitlessly inquiring after the cause of the dreadful noise that brought them in such haste from their beds into the streets. The soldiers who were about to make the sortie, were also rushing by in all directions, trampling on some and running their swords through others, who happened in their confusion to intercept their flight. The reader knows it was the fall of the Roman tower that caused the commotion, and lent such an uncanny ending to the dream of the High Priest. Still shuddering at the recollection of that dream in spite of his best attempts to get rid of it, he returned to his room and having relighted his lamp, began to arrange some scraps of parchment which lay in little heaps here and there upon a marble table. What was it that caused his hand to tremble so? Why did he take a key from a secret place and open a drawer, then close it hastily and turn about to listen, and finally re-open it and take out some letters and a locket? Why does he put back the letters and kiss the locket—only a gold trinket with a lock of hair—and the lips quiver—a shake of the head, the fall of a tear; what, a genuine tear shed by that hardened old man? 'Tis true. He cannot explain why; but that relic of the wife he married and lost when still a young man *would* come into his mind at this time. He had to look at it, and a whirlwind of memories sweeps his soul, and he falls on his knees and—what then? Does he repent those vile ambitions and vain plottings that usury and avarice, that neglect of duty, and pandering to the world's taste, those rash judgments and cruel injustices, perpetrated on his weak subordinates, that abhorrence of study, that seeking of self, that refusal to bow to the truth which often courted his acceptance, the truth that Jesus was the Christ? Ah, no! "Too late," he said, jumping up and putting away the trinket with the thoughts it brought along; "how weak I am. No danger

threatens me ; death is still far off. Courage my soul, these tears ill-become the future lord of Jerusalem." Matthias is not the only sinner who has acted similarly.

Next morning early, Irene visited her cousin's room, and after performing with her their customary devotions, made known the danger she was in of being thrown into the common dungeon, among criminals of every description. Anna's bright eyes were turned upon her, with a yearning look that needs only be seen to be interpreted, and their lustre was magnified tenfold, by the glistening tears which stood in them unbidden. "Irene, dearest cousin," she said, "let me go with you to prison or to death ; nothing shall ever separate us : I cannot live without you." Irene was touched by the simple and sincere girlish effusion of her relative ; but she checked the sob, and said decisively—almost sternly, "it cannot be, my cousin, you may not enter the race towards martyrdom, though you bear your present bruises well, until the waters of Baptism shall have purified you. Put your trust in our Lord, and He will preserve your faith." There was a look of resignation, tinged with disappointment, in the tear-stained eyes, as Anna answered, "I will try, Lord help me." For several hours they remained together undisturbed, each giving the other what consolation was in her power. At last, Irene said thoughtfully, "to-night Simon will arrest me, but I may escape before that. Cyprian is on the alert—Hush ! Did you hear a knock ?" Anna had not heard anything. Again the sound was heard, and Matthias opened the door of the apartment. His eyes wandered uneasily from Irene to his daughter, and from her to the tessellated floor, then back again to Irene, as if he was uncertain how to set about the delivery of his errand. Irene at length relieved his suspense ; for, though he was a man—the stronger vessel !—and she a woman, he an old priest, she a mere child, he trembled while he stood there before her, as a convict might, whom a judge was going to sentence, or a slave before a cruel master. Again, why, he knew not ; but he was at least conscious that he was about to perpetrate on his own niece a dastardly outrage. That she had made his daughter a Christian (touched his own conscience ?) was the crime that first armed him against her, and he was meditating the details of his revenge, when Gorgas came at noon to do the work

of his master. The minion did not tell Matthias, that resistance, on his part, would involve him too in ruin ; he withheld that part of his order for the present, and found it unnecessary afterwards. Matthias was, of course, profusely polite. He was delighted to be of service to the majesty of Simon, he said, and hastened to Irene's chamber to deliver her up at once. She was not there ; so he went over to his daughter's apartments, and it was his knock at her own door that Irene had detected when she asked Anna if she had heard anything. As the priest approached, the nature of his act began to show itself in all the hues of its villainous deformity, to his warped and seared conscience. To give up his niece, his adopted daughter ; and to a monster, and for what purpose ? Even *he* sickened at the thought, and indecision tempted him. When he stood in her presence—and such a presence, so young, so pure, so amiable—he was absolutely speechless. But her sweet voice restored him. "Uncle," she said, "which of us is it you seek ?" "A visitor," he replied in husky tones, "awaits you below : follow me." She arose and left the room without so much as looking at Anna, as she was unaware that the tyrant had shortened the time given her to choose ; and yet, they were then parting, never, perhaps, to meet again on earth. Who knows ? perhaps it was better their parting was thus ; for the pent-up feelings of the novice, had she suspected the truth, would have broken out uncontrollably, and created fresh difficulties for herself and cousin. Yet as Irene went out she heard Anna say, quite audibly, "Who knows whether we shall ever meet again."

As soon as she reached the ground floor where Gorgas was standing, the whole truth flashed upon her. She begged hard to return and see Anna for one moment, one instant, to kiss her good-bye. But this request was refused her, by the caution of the officer, and the cruelty of her uncle, who stifled the mutterings of his conscience with the answer, that on tomorrow he would himself open all the prisons. "Then I shall send her back to her own country with her brother," he mused. How often do men thus stifle the voice of right reason, which would restrain them, by assuring themselves they will hereafter make atonement for the sin they are presently bent on committing. "God help me," said the martyr with a sigh, and turning to her uncle, "good-bye", she muttered, yet

could not put out her hand to him, far less embrace him, for she seemed to read his treachery in that bloodshot eye. Then drawing down the veil which covered her head and shoulders, so as to conceal her features entirely, and fastening it under her girdle, she submitted, without a word, to be manacled and led forth into the street. Hither and thither crowds of armed men were hieing ; and as Gorgas and his fair prisoner passed along, they were jostled, often rudely, sometimes, by accident, and sometimes by design, now into the roadway, and now against the engaged columns of the porticos, or the projecting buttresses of massive towers, which flanked the mural defences of the city. It was the hour appointed for the meeting of the conspirators and those who favoured them. All through the previous night, messengers might be met scurrying through the deserted streets, soliciting recruits for the new movement, and urging their prompt appearance just after the morrow's sun would reach the meridian. That noon had come : the disease was spreading.

When Irene was gone, Matthias donned once more all his priestly garments : a blue tunic and seamless wide-sleeved garment reaching to his feet, fringed with gold and hung with bells ; a girdle made of purple, scarlet and blue threads mixed with gold ; an ephod or sort of breastplate, also of various colours, but richly adorned with gold plates, set with precious stones. On two of these stones which were very large sardonyxes, set in gold buttons, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved. Besides these, twelve other precious stones were set in four rows, three in a row, in the following order : a sardis, a topaz and an emerald ; a carbuncle, a jasper and a sapphire ; an agate, an amethyst and a ligure ; an onyx, a beryl and a chrysolite. This was, in reality, the distinctive ornament of the High Priest. Besides these, he wore a mitre made of fine white linen, adorned with a golden crown, and fastened by a blue riband. Thus vested, he set out with his attendants for the place of rendezvous, a burned district near the tower of Antonia. Five men had been sent on an embassy to Titus, to solicit pardon for the citizens, and to lay before him the plans of the conspirators : he received them favorably, and offered a sacrifice to Apollo for the success of their undertaking. Several hundred men had already assem-

bled to engage in the attempt ; many others to look on, prepared to profit by its success, or avoid the consequences of its failure. Knowing ones saw there, too, a number of Simon's *sicarii*, on the outskirts of the motley group ; but whether to help or oppose the movement it was not clear. The High Priest mounted the broken base of a pilaster, one of many which had graced a magnificent palace, now a heap of burnt and battered ruins. He was about to harangue the rescuers, his hand raised aloft to command silence, when the shrill blast of a trumpet caused every eye to turn and look in the direction whence it came—the tower of Phasaëlus. There, bare-headed upon a balcony, his left hand upon the carved balustrade, his right extended and grasping a short rusty sword, stood Simon. Matthias turned like the rest, and when he caught a glimpse of the tyrant, the memory of his dream flashed before him. He knew he was betrayed. His face which was flushed by the intoxication of almost tangible success, became ashy pale ; the naked sword he carried fell from his nerveless fingers clanging from step to step on the shattered portico, and he would have fallen backward, perhaps to meet the fate of Eli, if some of Simon's soldiers—ever ready to do duty for their master—had not seized him and borne him off to meet a more direful death. The conspiracy, like that of Cataline a century before, was strangled in the dawn of its success, and Macarias, whose living words had fanned its infant flame, was the traitor, who that very morning had handed over its secrets to the vengeful Simon. Not a hand was raised to save the wily priest ; the single blast of that fatal trumpet had turned all hearts to stone. The soldiers fell upon those who seemed to favor the plot and chased them in every direction, as the wind doth chaff, and the streets were suddenly filled with clamour and scenes of blood.

Gorgas was attacked by several armed men among whom was Cyprian, who fought to rescue his sister. Gorgas indeed fell once, but others came to his assistance, and the fight lasted with varying fortune for nearly half an hour. Men fought singly or in pairs, with friends or against them ; as they took the humor, without in the least knowing why, or caring what would be the result. Citizens and soldiers alike, with few exceptions, were anxious for death, and any death would be easier than starvation. Irene escaped and was hurrying away

under cover of her brother's sword, when Grogas, who was but stunned by his fall, overtook, and with the help of a comrade recaptured her, but not until he had broken brave Cyprian's blade, and felled him heavily to the earth with a cut over the temple. Once more a prisoner, she was dragged along to the fortress in an unconscious state, and thrown upon the floor of an apartment from which a cadaverous stench issued, when its brazen doors were thrown open. How long she remained unconscious she knew not ; but the grating of the door on its hinges, brought her once more to her senses. When she looked about her, the first object that met her gaze, was—O horror !—the unconscious form of Matthias, who, with his three sons, were now in the power of the tyrant. She strove to get up and go to his assistance ; for it is the first instinct of woman to relieve the sufferings or supply the wants of others, neglectful of her own. But Irene was his niece besides, and was but dimly conscious of the wrong he had contemplated against her. She was unable, however, to move hand or foot ; she was chained there like a wild beast. Her wrists were sore, cut deep by the hateful iron links, and every movement increased the pain ; but what hurt her most was this : that she could not do anything for Matthias. After a time, a long time for her, awaking consciousness was manifested in the High Priest, by a groan. "Uncle, O uncle, would I could help thee," sobbed the helpless girl, raising her chained hands and extending them towards the prostrate and wounded priest, whose hair, beard, and soiled and torn garments were moist with clotted blood, that dripped sluggishly about him on the stone floor, from numerous wounds in his head and face. That voice, so sweet, so sad and pleading, that it might have soothed the troubled spirit of the fallen man, seemed to startle him. He looked about and saw, defiled with dust and blood, yet amiable withal, the face which only a few hours since had awakened in his soul feelings of pity and bitter remorse. What a contrast was there between those two beings—youthful innocence and aged guilt. He groaned as if a heavy weight hitherto suspended above him had just crushed down upon his head ; it was the fierce and fleet-footed retribution of his treachery. Under its mountain load he uttered a loud cry of anguish and relapsed into insensibility.

Ah, the instability of earthly honors and pleasures ! Had this man never known the comforts purchasable by wealth, his present poverty would have for him no sting. Had he spent his days on the hillside tending a little flock, and then been suddenly deprived of his liberty, his sufferings through acute, would still be tolerable. But Matthias had feasted on the best that came from the offerings on the altar, his couch was of the finest down, his garments of the richest texture and most gorgeous colors. He was accustomed to command, and in view of the power the conspiracy would place in his hands, his ambitious soul soared aloft and already seated itself in imagination on an airy throne, far higher than the one he had occupied on the temple in his dream. But the coils of the serpent of retribution had encircled him ; and as his position was exalted, so the abyss of misery into which he had been hurled, was proportionately deep and degrading. There, in that damp dungeon, held fast by a criminal's chain, abandoned by all the men of his tribe and nation is Matthias, the successor of Aaron, the last High Priest who sacrificed on the altar of the Temple of Jerusalem !

Anna, who knew nothing of the conspiracy, was startled from her slumber by the din of arms, and the wailings of women and children under her windows. Her head was sore and her shoulders bruised, so that it was difficult for her to move about. Then a messenger came in hurriedly and informed her of her father's arrest and imprisonment, and she was followed by a little girl who related what befel Irene. Anna would not believe the news at first ; then she was shocked, and forgetting her bodily pains, fell on her knees at her bedside, wept, and shrieked, and begged for some consolation. The messengers were gone, she was alone. She rushed down stairs and into the street with dishevelled hair, half frenzied with grief and terror—she was now an orphan—and went aimlessly on. In turning down a very narrow lane, she beheld, right in her way, what she took to be the dead body of Cyprian. With a scream she stooped and raised her cousin's head ; he groaned—thank God ! he is not dead. She called for help and it came. Several women recognised the daughter of their Priest, and coming to her aid, bore the body to the nearest open doorway. His wound was not deep ; but had not the blood been

staunch, it might have proved fatal. Cyprian soon regained consciousness, and was able to raise himself up, and his first enquiry was for his sister. They told each other all they knew about the dreadful events of the past few hours, and then the young man noticed, for the first time, the cuts on Anna's head. She was unwilling to tell him how she came by them; but yielded at length to his earnest manner. "You must not go to the prison, Anna," said he at last, when he felt that he was able to walk, "return home with me and leave the rest to Providence. Henceforth you are my charge." And they went together with tottering steps in the direction of the desolate homestead.

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CHAPTER V.

A BEREAVED FATHER.

DEEP down in the valley of the Cedron, in a gorge where the faint pallor of the moon added the dark shadows of overhanging rocks to the gloom ; deep down where fluttered the foul night bird's wing, as he fed on the flesh of the recent slain, and carried off the tit-bits to his young ; deep down where the soil-worm revelled in corrupting flesh, and at the disturbing approach of prowling beasts crawled for shelter into skulls that once had thought and willed ; deep down where fetid airs and mephitic vapors hovered heavily, marking the abode of pestilence and putrefaction, and myriad millions of winged insects swayed with the currents of the atmosphere—with parched throat, and fever stricken brain, and pressed by a mass of incumbent corpses in that unclosed burying pit of a vast city, lay Irene's father, Xanthus, whose wounds, though severe, were not fatal. He awoke after several hours of insensibility to find himself cast away among the dead. The creeping horror inspired by the situation soon gave way to the instinct of preservation, and Xanthus, struggling to his feet, and then stumbling among the dead, frightening by his movements the filthy things that fed there, groped his way with bated breath, and sickened feelings, to where the moon shone full upon the purling waters of the brook. With that seemingly unquenchable thirst which results from loss of blood, the wounded man plunged into the water, and drank to satiety. Thus refreshed, he bathed his wounds, ascended the opposite bank, and travelled northward, till challenged by one of the Roman sentries. His tale was soon told, his accent, the purest dialect of Attica, charmed the ears of his hearers, while his manner convinced them of his

entire veracity. He was a Roman citizen—true, that once glorious title was falling rapidly in value—and he had been abused by a Hebrew, the most contemptible thing, in Roman estimation, that existed. Titus swore by the immortal gods that the wrong should be avenged, and forthwith ordered a number of Jews, who had escaped from the city, to be crucified on the following day, in full view of the inhabitants. Small comfort this to a bereaved parent, who, at a blow, was robbed of all he treasured most in life—his wife, his daughter and his son.

The siege progressed through the wearying hot summer months, little varying in character from day to day. Xanthus remained with or near the army, wishing, almost hoping to see his children once more, alive. How the heart of this parent clung to hope, and tried to beguile despair! How he rushed eagerly into every fresh group of deserters from the city, day after day, month after month, and carefully, with feverish eyes, scanned each face; then, neither child appearing, turned sadly, despondingly away, muttering to himself, "My God! will I ever see their faces?" How, too, he often visited the spot where the city's dead were cast, and where himself had lain, half buoyant with the thought that perhaps, like himself, his children might be alive among the dead; and again half fearing he might find them in want of naught but one office, and that, decent burial! How he shrank back at every few steps, yet lingered, gazing on the unburied dead, hardly less pained by his failure than he would have been by the successful issue of his search. At the sight of this father, young in years, but bearing the marks that age claims the right to set on men, wrestling with a despair that thrived and waxed stronger with every new disappointment, the stoutest hearts grew feeble, the brightest eyes grew dim.

The fatal day for the temple was fast approaching. Titus had effected an entrance into the northern portion of the city—the most modern and unimportant part—and was now making preparations to destroy the tower of Antonia, and thereby to command the defences of the holy place, which he wished to save with as little injury to it as possible. The messengers sent out by Mathias to negotiate for a surrender, returned to the walls with the favourable answer

of Titus, but could not enter, so close and energetic were the watch set by Simon, when he scented the treachery of the High Priest. A few persons who escaped from the slaughter entered the Roman camp, and told the tale of the failure of the conspiracy, and of the fall of Mathias. Titus, who delayed a while in anxiety for the success of the plot, thereupon hastened to put his plans in execution. Towards evening on the day fixed for the attack, everything was put in readiness, and just as the sentries were entering on their watch, the one near the tower of Hippicus, on the west side, and opposite the third wall, noticed a human figure dropping from the parapet, and rolling into the deep trench. Was it a corpse dropped over the wall by official hands? Or was it an additional refugee coming to court death from the besiegers, for almost all such were at once put to the sword, or crucified. It is a corpse now, at any rate, thought the sentinel, as that ravine has a sharp rocky bottom; and he began to hum a rude air, and thought no more of the occurrence. Here let us return to the city.

When Simon knew that the high-priest was at last in his power, a twitch of malicious joy came over the muscles of his savage face. "Now," said he, "to end him." Straightway he sent for his chief headsman Ananus, the son of Bamadus, and instructed him to make away with Mathias next day. "Kill his sons before his eyes," he added, "that he may know what it means to resist the arms of Simon." Next day came with its deeds of bravery done by a few rash ones on both sides; with its harrowing death-bed scenes, where the gaunt spectre of hunger mocked his victims; with its acts of violence perpetrated by the armed upon the unarmed, who suffered with the resignation begotten of despair, with, in a word, the thousand and one incidents, important and unimportant, that go to make up the circumscribed life of a beleaguered city. Early in the day the prison where Mathias was confined was opened, and he, still clad in his priestly robes, and besmeared with dust and clotted blood, was removed to a court in front of Simon's palace. The army was drawn about in such a way as to prevent a rescue, or suppress a riot. Simon appeared, surrounded by his guards, his frowzy hair and disordered tunic betraying the debauch of the previous night. A mock trial was allowed the priest,

and Macarius repeated his testimony about the origin of the conjuration. Mathias was asked if he had any request to make. "Only this," he said, casting himself on his knees before the tyrant, "that as a return for opening the gates for you, who I hoped would be the savior, not the scourge of our people, you will put me first to sleep with my fathers, and afterwards my sons." The tyrant laughed. "Know, priest," retorted he, "that you sought your own advantage in opening the gates for me; I follow your example, and seek mine in opening them to let your carcase pass out." "My blood be upon you," said the priest, and amid the jeers of Simon's henchmen, and in full view of the Roman legions, whom Simon ironically invited to aid the victim, the heads of the priest's three sons, and then his own rolled in the dust, and were kicked about by the soldiers. Macarius, who hoped to gain favor by divulging the plot, was now brought before the tyrant; who thus addressed him: "Jew, with a Greek name, men ever have acted to serve themselves. Jacob cheated his brother from this motive, and all sinners follow his example. You betrayed your friends, not to be of use to me, but to yourself. One who betrays his old friends, will betray his new ones, if it will increase his fortune." The unfortunate Macarius fell prostrate with fear, and at a sign from Simon the headsman lifted him into a sitting posture—by the hair—and with a short sharp sword severed his head from his body. While this bloody scene was enacting, under the young sunlight, Irene was visited by Joras, the tyrant's son. He ordered the chains to be removed from the hands and feet of the woman he loved, and then repeated the story of his heart, entreating her to have compassion on herself and on him, by consenting at once to become his wife. Irene listened to his words, while affecting to be inattentive, and began to calculate the chances of escape by playing with his affections. If he really loved her, he would set her free, no doubt, upon her affecting to yield to his wishes. Then she might find means to escape from the city. That this plan would be successful was at least possible, but it involved so much impropriety that, on second thought she rejected it with indignation. Her religion taught her to put principles above temporal advantages; and so, although the instinct of self-preservation was as strong in her as in others, she scorned to save herself by lying or disimu-

lation. She hesitated long before replying, however; and Joras interpreting her silence favorably, was about to embrace her, when she, perceiving his intention, sprang quickly backward, and said firmly, "Leave me alone, nor come to insult my misfortune."

"If what you say is true, if you have even respect for a weak woman, open these doors and set me free, for how can I believe my jailer's professions?" At this moment a door opened, and a guard entered to summon in haste the young man to his father's council. Glad to escape from the embarrassment of his situation, for he really passionately loved Irene, he left the room without once looking towards her, lest the fascination of her eyes should drive him to some foolish deed. Apart, he nursed his chagrin and conceived all manner of plots to engage her affections. If she could only see how brave he was, how open-hearted, how unlike and superior to other men! Rushing along to his father's residence, time for him flew rapidly, crowding into each fugitive moment a world of bliss, an eternity of disappointment. In the delirium of his passion, he wandered far beyond the tower; and each well devised artifice to win the stubborn maiden—now become a thousand fold more desirable because unyielding—looked puerile when her stern yet plaintive words "If you have respect for me, set me free," came ringing in his ears. And he came at last to hate her, or to think he did, and forthwith announced the fact to himself by a loud imprecation which had the effect of bringing his bitter-day dream to an abrupt ending. "What a fool I was," he soliloquized, retracing his steps, "to let a woman engross my thoughts, I'll think of her no more." "Yet," he mused, "if I see her eyes again, I'am undone, she must die to-morrow." He reached the tower, and entered to meet the savage eye of his father, who was anxiously waiting for him. Meanwhile Irene, whose subtle Greek mind had now recovered its mastery of her weak frame, rapidly developed those traits which occasion brings to the surface. She went about through several apartments, looking for a place of egress, and in one, on the south side, discovered in the wall near the ceiling, a small square aperture, through which she knew her slight frame would pass, if she could but reach it. From the opposite side she could see, by standing on tip-toe, that

the window beyond the embrasure had no bars, and that a little iron sash with two small panes filled it. The pains of Tantalus seized her at the sight ; there was no way of reaching the window. She rapped on the door and called for help. A guard appeared, a malicious-looking little frowzy-haired man, with small scrofulous eyes without brows or lashes. In an instant Irene saw that he suffered from hunger, and at once she concluded that the gratification of his appetite would outweigh his sense of duty ; as her keeper, so she forthwith offered him a bribe. She had about her person many valuable jewels, and also some silver and gold peices, and from the last she chose a daric and held the glittering tempter towards him at the same time saying, "Take it and allow me to depart." Now, if Simon had given strict orders to the guard to observe extra caution in the case of Irene, the bribe would have been no inducement to him to allow her to escape ; but in his haste, the tyrant neglected this so important condition of her safe keeping, and the guard, not knowing how great a prize was in his charge, and pressed by the cravings of his appetite, yielded easily to her importunity. Towards sunset he brought her a quantity of food and some wine that had been stolen, doubtless, from the cellar of the tyrant. She ate sparingly, although it was the first time since early morning the day before, that she had eaten anything. What slow-paced steeds does time employ when he bears us gifts ! The few hours Irene spent in that prison seemed ages, and to her latest day she shuddered on remembering the pangs she there endured, surrounded by enemies, and almost despairing of release. When evening approached, a door was accidentally left open by the guard (so he afterwards explained), and Irene, making good use of the opportunity offered, and uttering a prayer for success, went out and ran directly towards the western wall. Her brother she had seen fall by the sword cut, and his bleeding form was the last thing she recollected having seen previous to her imprisonment. That she thought him dead was not to be wondered at ; and though it seemed there was nothing now to live for, to escape the infamy designed for her by Simon, was worthy an attempt, even if certain death awaited her at the hands of the Romans. She was but a few hours gone, when Joras, who had been all day engaged with his father

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planning means of escape from the city, returned to the prison, attracted in spite of his chagrin, by a fascination he could not rid himself of; though he repeatedly asserted to himself, and confirmed the assertion with oaths, that he no longer loved Irene, that, in fact, he loathed her. Still he went on. It is needless to say he did not find her, and, also, that the guard's explanation, that he did not know her rank, did not save him from death; for angry men always repair their own oversight by punishing others. The elder Simon was furious beyond measure, and piced his room like a caged tiger till the parox-
ism wore off.



CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT.

"I saw two clouds at morning
Tinged by the rising sun,
And in the dawn they floated on,
And mingled into one."—BRAINARD.

IN a former chapter we left Anna in the charge of Cyprian. When he reached her father's house, he found it had been already ransacked by the soldiers, and everything valuable carried off. It was certain that they would trouble it no more ; so he entered and led the way to his sister's room. Here they sat down, and after drinking some water, it was the only beverage to be had in the city, joined in a prayer—short but earnest, to the Son of God—that he might yet preserve their lives. The exhaustion consequent on his almost fatal wounds, now took possession of Cyprian ; he sank into a profound stupor, watched by her for whom alone he cared to live, and in a few hours was in the throes of a delirious fever. But few words had passed between them since their misfortunes cast their lot together, but their looks were made eloquent by the passion that even burning words might chill. This language of love is never mistaken by others, though its meaning is often partly, often entirely hidden from the lovers themselves. Was it so in this instance ? The fever that seized Cyprian so suddenly and so violently, robbed him of the endearments of love, but intensified the sentiment. As he lay there upon a few articles of clothing, which were spread on the floor for a bed, and tossed about his nerveless arms in the heat of the fever that devoured his brain, she sat by him, bathing his brow or cleansing the wounds in his head and neck, the gathering tears in her lus-

trous eyes being the silent sacrifice she offered on the altar of the idol of her heart. In his ravings her name was often mentioned, but those of his father, his mother, and his sister, oftener. Was this a sign that he loved her not as she loved him? Eagerly she waited for the return of consciousness. Often he would turn his dazed look upon her, but the blaze of reason flashed not in those gaping eyes; and when she almost dared to hope that he recognized her, he would avert his gaze, muttering unintelligible jargon, thereby re-opening the half-healed wound in her soul. A few poor women of the neighborhood, who still loved to honor the priest in his unfortunate daughter, occasionally nursed the sick man, while Anna snatched a few hours of much needed but troubled sleep; but others whose malice grew apace with the sufferings of its object insulted the stricken daughter of a once great, but luckless father. After three days of racking torture for Cyprian, and hardly less pain for her who ministered so tenderly to his wants, the fever left him, and although unable to raise his head, or move his limbs, he recognized at his side, anxiously awaiting the return of intelligent expression to his countenance, the faithful Anna. He breathed her name softly and a feeble smile hovered around his pallid lips. That smile repaid her for the long days and longer nights of watching and suspense. A few days more and he would be able to sit up, and then some means must be devised to escape from the city. He could only advert to this briefly, as his weakness forbade long conversation. What had become of Irene was a mystery, impenetrable alike to both; and though a faint rumor went abroad that she had escaped, they could not credit it, for, if it were true, they believed she would undoubtedly have made her way to their abode. They could only leave all to Providence, and so endeavor to practice the spirit of resignation to the mysterious workings of the Divine will. He strove at intervals to improve her knowledge of Christianity, knowing well that it would strengthen her to bear up under any possible affliction; and the words coming from the lips of the one she loved sank more rapidly on that account, into the good soil of her heart, there to fructify a hundred-fold, as the sequel will show. A little before the dawn of day, on the morning fixed for the attack on the tower of Antonia, a certain centurian, Julius Lepidus by

name, was ordered to go along the whole length of the western wall, to see that the sentries were at their posts, and to note any unusual movements of the besieged. As he approached a ravine between the Roman lines and the tower called Hippicus, he descried something white apparantly moving about stealthily, then suddenly pausing, as his footsteps echoed through the trench. He called the attention of the guard Servius to it, the same man who earlier in the night had seen a white object drop from the wall. After a short consultation, the centurian and the guard separated, and hurriedly descended into the ditch, intending to cut off on every side, the escape of the refugee from the city. As they approached from different directions, the female, for such it proved to be, uttered a loud, piercing shriek, and sank to the ground. Servius reached her first, and rudely taking hold of her by the shoulder, raised her into a standing posture, and literally shook her back into consciousness. The centurian at this moment arrived, and ordered the guard to desist from violence, adding that it was unmanly to injure a weak woman. The guard, however, claimed her for his own, and a violent wordy altercation was going on, when she, regaining courage, and seeing the danger of her position, turned a beseeching look upon Julius, and exclaimed, in the Greek tongue, "Good Sir, I am in your hands to save or destroy me; take my life if you wish, but as you honor your own dear mother save an orphan from dishonor." As she spoke, the first gleam of dawn broke through the sullen darkness, and revealed a face of exquisite mould, but bespattered with blood, and wearing an expression of intense and unspeakable suffering. Her garments were torn, her veil gone, and her hair matted and hanging loosely about her, reaching to her waist. Had he looked more closely he might have seen, too, that her feet were bare and bloody; but though her general appearance was taken in at a glance, it was her eyes that rivited his attention. Deep, dark, and entreating, they burned into his very soul, and so completely had that one look of hers mastered him, that had she asked him to face unarmed, a thousand foes, he would at that moment have willingly confronted the danger. "Beautiful maiden," he replied, also in the Greek language, as he placed his left arm about her, and raised aloft his right, which grasped

the sword, "had I not even understood your words, your look would engage me to die for your safety. I know you must be noble, and no Hebrew; by what name shall I address you?" "I am called Irene," she replied, tears of gratitude rolling down her flushed cheeks, "and I have escaped from the violence of a tyrant. Last night I leaped from the wall, not inviting, but regardless of death, and for a time I lay unconscious hereabout. At length my senses came back to me, and I was looking for a way to escape to the Roman lines, when I perceived you both running towards me. As you came near me I feared I had escaped infamy within the walls, to meet it without, but God has heard my prayer; I am safe." On hearing the name Irene, both men started, and stared at her, and though Servius had no further desire to harm her, who was, he now knew, the daughter of Xanthus, yet he gnashed his teeth in a fit of jealous rage, and wished Julius at the bottom of the Tiber. "Come, child," said the latter, turning to ascend the fosse, "I will lead you to one who has long hoped to see you, your father—" "Father," echoed Irene, starting back, "my father is dead, good sir." "I think not," answered Julius, "for surely you are the daughter of Xanthus." Overcome with the sudden emotions of joy and fear, of thankfulness, and yet of incredulity, she fell upon her knees, and bowed low to the earth. "O! merciful Father," she cried, "if this be true, and Thou hast so favored Thy servant, deign to accept my thankful homage; Thou art too kind to me so unworthy." The heart of Julius was moved, and involuntarily tears gushed from the eyes of the soldier, whom torrents of martial blood could not move to pity. Tenderly he raised her from her prostrate position, and helped her with a trembling hand, to push back the matted and disordered hair from her face. With the toga, or mantle which he wore over his armor, he covered her bare head and shoulders, to protect her from the chilly air, and leading her quickly to a sort of half covered cavern, or rather crevice in the rock, near which trickled a stream of pure water, he requested her to await there his return from his rounds, when he promised to lead her to her father. "How can I thank you, bravest of Romans," said Irene, in a voice whose silvery intonations were marked with a thrill which betrays

a fast beating heart, "or how can I repay such kindness as this, and from a stranger?" "Dismiss O! beautiful maid," replied Julius, whose emotion almost choked his utterance, "dismiss these thoughts; we shall not always I hope, be strangers." So saying, he seized her hand and pressing it to his lips, departed. When the sound of his footsteps had faded from her ear, she bathed her head and washed the blood stains from her face and hands. She strove to quiet her feelings, and as a preliminary began to study the causes of her extraordinary agitation. Her sudden arrest, the rescue by her brother, her recapture and his fall, the sight of her uncle in chains, her flight from the prison, her exertion clambering over two walls, the shock of her fall into the trench, her capture by a rude and profligate soldier,—these were of course events of a kind that might excite the nerves of a trained athlete to their greatest tension; but there was something else that disturbed her, something that remained, when the feeling of present security had quieted her somewhat, by allaying her apprehensions of danger. Did it spring from anxiety to see her father? Undoubtedly she longed to meet him, to throw herself upon his breast, to hear his voice once more calling her as in her childhood, his little lily. With the rapidity of thought, her whole life passed before her eyes; every pleasing and every awful incident distilling its drop of honey or of gall in her active memory; but of all the faces held up by the faithful mirror of the past to her view, one only impressed her in a peculiar way, and as none other ever had or could. All others resolved themselves into this one face, and as it looked down upon her a thrill of joy and a throb of pain seemed at the same moment to penetrate her soul. This thought annoyed her while it pleased and soothed, and after a brief struggle to think of other things, the maiden gave herself up to the study of this new and fascinating experience. As she wandered in the mazes of her thoughts, a sound at a little distance startled her, and its repetition caused her serious alarm. She was alone now, and who would shield her from this new enemy? As she shrank back further into the recess, an animal, of what kind she could not discern, approached, and growled fiercely on observing her. As its small fiery eyes fastened upon her she uttered a loud scream and was about to fall fainting on the rock, when

she beheld above her the face that had previously had such a singular effect upon her. It was that of Julius Lepidus, and she felt that she was safe. The jackal, for such was the beast that terrified Irene, bounded away with a piteous wail, terrified in its turn by her scream and by the sight of the armed Julius, who had sprung lightly upon the roof of the cavern and leaped into the den that was doubtless its lair. "Lovely maiden," said the soldier in his softest accents, "I am grieved that new terrors have been added to your situation, by the intrusion of that ugly beast, but be tranquil ; while I am with you you are safe. The moments seemed hours since I left you, and I feared you would imagine I had forgotten you ; I could never forget you," he added. "I know not how to thank you," said Irene, not daring to look up, lest she would betray her agitation, "but my father will reward you, if indeed, Xanthus lives." If he could have known how his voice set her heart throbbing, and sent the hot blood eddying to her cheeks, he could not fail to perceive that he had touched a chord in her breast which beat in unison with his own. Would he read in her expressive look, that his words had breathed softest music into her responsive soul ? Would he discover in the tremor of her mellow tones, the voiceless murmur of a sea of feeling, whose depths herself might hardly sound ? Or would he mistake these indications for the expression of gratitude alone ? He loved her with a sudden, but a deep and passionate love, a love which is felt by noble souls only, but whether she loved him, was a secret he dared not yet attempt to discover. As they wended their way over the broken and stony ground towards the tent where Xanthus was known to lodge, he plied her with many questions concerning her friends, and others in the city, while she in turn learned from the happy Julius—happy in her company and in the enjoyment of her confidence—many things about her father, and the manner of his escape. It was now day break, and the whole army was astir for the assault. Many an eye turned, some in anger, some in mirth on Julius and his charge, as they passed through be vies of soldiers preparing for the march, but the remarks made by the latter, mostly in a provincial Latin, were unintelligible to Irene, and elicited no response from Julius. Too soon they reached the tent they sought. They entered. Xanthus was asleep at the

further end, and near him flickered a lamp whose faint light discovered to Irene the well-known features of her father, who awoke at the sound of her approach. He started to his feet as if he had seen an apparition, when the features of his child broke upon his waking vision. Shall we attempt to depict the scene that followed the mutual recognition of father and child? With an exclamation of mingled gladness and surprise, he sprang towards her with open arms, and pressed her to his breast. Julius silently withdrew, lest in any way his presence should prove an annoyance, and went immediately to his own quarters to be in readiness for the assault. Need we say that more tears were shed than words spoken, or that the joy of the parent consequent on the recovery of his lost child so brimmed his soul, that he had no thought for a while, of her lost brother. After indulging the first impulse of feeling, Xanthus began to see how fearful were the sufferings his child must have endured; but, though he yearned to know all about her escape from the city, he resolved not to fatigue her then; so, suppressing his curiosity, he quietly sent for medical aid, and provided her in the meantime with the food and rest she stood so much in need of. "My little lily," said he, "you have suffered much, but you must not speak more now, go to sleep child, and at sundown you will be refreshed." "Oh, dear father," she replied, obediently disposing herself on a small pallet, "how good is God to us, I never expected to see you. I thought you were long since dead—oh, if my poor mother were here now!" "But, father," she continued, looking up in surprise at him, "your hair is gray, oh, how you must have suffered." "Yes, child," he said, "misfortunes have fallen heavily upon me, but now I am content, God has restored my daughter to me," and he stooped and pressed her head endearingly to his bosom, and kissed her innocent brow. "But sleep now, child, take this draught of wine, and you will soon be yourself again, there is so much you must tell me." He sat by the pallet on which Irene reposed, and watched her with the eager wistful gaze of a parent, till long after she had sank into a peaceful slumber. As he looked down upon those features now cleansed from the defilement of gore, a revery fell upon him. The thoughts of other days came back and looming out of the haze of the past, flitted before his eyes. As he

looked upon the face of the sleeper, twenty years were annihilated, and it seemed but yesterday when he first beheld the face of her mother, on the strand of rocky Cos. The smooth current of his early married life then flowed gleefully past him, and in its peaceful waters he saw mirrored the happy events of a life that seemed too pleasant to be of earth. Then the grim forms of grief, and of death, glowered on him with hideous looks and the pang he felt, when the young sharer of his joys and sorrows fell bleeding at his side, pierced his heart, and evoked a cry that disturbed the sleeper in her dreams. She turned, though sleeping, and sighed, then smiled a radiant smile that once more lifted the load from her father's heart, as the morning sun chases the mists from the winding river.

Leaving him thus engaged, let us return to Julius. It had been the policy of Titus to spare the lives as far as possible of his soldiers, and to prevent their engaging in rash acts, which might indeed be mistaken for the results of bravery, when in reality they were but the product of headless impetuosity. He offered great rewards, however, to the first man who, on this day, would plant the Roman eagle on the walls. Everything so far had gone prosperously enough, but to scale a guarded wall, though necessary, was fraught with extreme peril. Long before sunrise the army was in motion, and to the tenth legion, the one in which Julius held command was allotted the post of honor. Diversions were made in various quarters to distract the besieged, and oblige them to divide their forces, but the main part of the army advanced towards the wall, near the tower of Antonia. The tower itself had been undermined some days previously; but John of Gishala, who ruled in that part of the city, had a new wall built within it, thus impeding the Roman advance.

Many heroic deeds were done as the day wore on; but, though some approaches to the temple were burnt partly by the Romans, partly by the Jews themselves, no decisive victory was obtained. Instances of single combat were frequent, and the hand to hand fighting with short swords was terrible. Many men perished in the flames, and one Roman, who had single-handed driven a body of Jewish soldiers before him, slipped on the glassy pavement of the temple, was stunned, and in this state ignominiously put to death, by those who, a

moment before, fled before his victorious onset. Julius had his share of hard fighting, but his thoughts oftener reverted to the tent of Xanthus, than rested on the task before him. Finally evening came, and the prospect of an immediate capture of the city faded, as the welcome darkness put an end to deeds that the many call glorious, and the few inhuman.

Julius then finding himself free, made his way to the spot where his heart sought a treasure. When he entered the tent of Xanthus, Irene was seated by the side of her father, neatly dressed and greatly improved in appearance by her recent repose. She arose at his approach, saluted him, and introduced him as her rescuer, to her father. "Brave Julius," said Xanthus, "my daughter has just been recounting the story of her trials since we parted, and particularly the danger she escaped in reaching the Roman lines. That she feels grateful to you, I need not tell you, and I mean to reward you for restoring to me a lost jewel." Julius was disconcerted, and the fact that Irene seemed to regard him with admiration, did not act as a sedative upon his agitated feelings. But he quickly mastered himself, and in a few well chosen words expressed his delight to be able to further the happiness of a father, and particularly the father of such a daughter as Irene. He looked towards her as he spoke, and would have wished to say what he felt, but he feared that the shortness of their acquaintance would appear to make such a declaration premature; and besides she did not lift her eyes to his in response to the compliment, though the delicate blush which suffused her neck and rose rapidly to her pale cheek, told him she felt it and was grateful. Xanthus was not slow to read the hearts of both, however, and fearing the consequence would be disastrous, he sought to extinguish the flame he perceived rising, not by directly attacking it, but indirectly. He thought that separation would cool the ardor of love, and resolved to leave the camp without delay. For the present he discoursed with his visitor on several subjects, chiefly military and political, thereby shutting out his daughter from the conversation. Julius was well-informed on every subject broached; and as the dialogue proceeded, his periods, delivered with a rich and sonorous expression of voice, precision and absence of foreign accent delighted his hearers, while the depth and variety of his knowledge and the flu-

ency with which a Roman spoke their own tongue astonished them. An inquiry on their part, respecting his birth and parentage, elicited the fact that his mother was a Greek, born indeed in Italy, but of parents who emigrated from Asia Minor—hence his perfect mastery of that difficult language. At long intervals Irene dropped a short comment, or made some remark on the subject under consideration, but it was long before she had occasion to engross the attention of both father and lover.

The state of society since the days of Augustus was passed in review; the annihilation of the republic and its absorption by the Empire; the reign of violence inaugurated by the army, in choosing the Emperors, the uncertainty of the peace of society, when murder was so lightly thought of, and life so little valued, when marriage was almost unknown, and dishonesty lifted its audacious front in public places. "How unfortunate are the nations," said Irene thoughtfully, and without lifting her eyes from the sward which formed the floor of the tent, "that know not the true God," she continued after a slight pause; "they have no peace here and expect none hereafter, or rather, know nothing of the mysteries sealed within the future." Julius looked at her first wonderingly, then with a sort of sneer, tempered with admiration. The sentiment was noble, but what could it mean for him. Well read in the various philosophies of Greece, he had become a sceptic, while endeavoring to reconcile their contradictions. He disbelieved in gods, and could not assure himself that there was even one God. His doubts often left him in a profound calm, but oftener in a state of mind like that of an army preparing for a struggle, that was, it knew not, how near at hand. The words of Irene renewed the combat in him for a moment—a moment only—and then succeeded the forced calm, the product of a determination never again to bother himself about God or religion. Hence the sneer. "Child," said Xanthus, "our friend is certainly not of our belief and he cannot appreciate your remark. We," he continued, addressing Julius, who was about to interrupt him, "are Christians, and have what you would call peculiar ideas about this life, and the future." He was glad, apparently, to find a subject on which they could disagree. The rogue. "By the way, have you been much at sea?" Julius thought that he saw here an attempt to change the subject, and al-

though it for a moment agreed with his own feelings, to do so, something prompted him, some vague curiosity which he could never explain, to return to the question of God and the future. He was wrong. Xanthus wished to continue the subject, and his question was only a feint. He felt sure that Julius would forsake any woman who was a Christian. "We shall speak of the sea anon," he replied, "but meanwhile, I would know something of your philosophy." "Do you not hold much the same doctrines as the Jews?" Xanthus was cornered, for beyond the forms he knew little of his religion or of its philosophy, and turning to Irene he asked her to show his friend how far he was right, and where he erred; "for" he explained, "she is better instructed than I. My business keeps me away from close study."

Is it necessary to say that both Irene and Julius were pleased that the conversation had taken this direction? She coloured deeply, but did not hesitate to begin her task. Turning her beautiful eyes full upon him, she said, "O bravest of the Romans to what school of philosophy do you belong?" "I do not hold to any;" he answered, "I have devoured everything the philosophers have written, but I am seemingly as far as ever from the truth." "Then you admit that truth exists somewhere," said Irene, "that is, absolute, necessary truth; therefore a true being, the source in some way of all others?" He saw the justness of the consequence to which she had pushed his remark, but he dared not admit it; so he answered evasively, "The sceptics will allow of no truth; we are the victims of illusion." "Then you lean towards their doctrines," she said falteringly. "I almost favor universal doubt," he replied. "How can doubt be a principle, though," asked Irene, "and above all, how can you account for our existence by such a principle?" "The sceptics treat existence as an illusion, or vision," he interjected. "Then they are certain that they thus treat it;" she retorted, "or at least they are positive that they make the assertion, and are certainly very positive in making it; therefore they really admit something as certain, namely, the certainty that they treat, or say that they treat, existence as a vision or an illusion. They also admit the reality of existence while doubting or denying it. For what is a vision but a representation of a reality?"

"But," said Julius, "we may have ideas of things, that do not exist." "Yes," answered Irene, "if we conjure these unreal visions from real things, that we know to exist. Thus we know may that a horse is a real being, and wood is real, and so we may fancy a horse with wooden legs. Now such a horse does not exist; but as far as the mind regards it, it is real in its particulars. Now we cannot discriminate between illusion and reality, without admitting real existence. And truth is existence or that which is. Therefore it is plain that by their own act whether in looking for truth, or in doubting or denying it, the sceptics themselves affirm truth, that is existence. We have then an idea of truth, even of that truth which is absolute, without limit or subordination to any other thing. As ideas are the mental expression of realities, or, if you wish, real things affecting our minds, and making them conscious of their presence or existence, therefore absolute truth, or truth without limit, really exists. We have an idea of it. "Is not this clear," she asked. "It would be," he replied. "If I understood your assertion, that truth is that which is—existence; but I do not understand it." "Pardon me," said she, "but from your own expression that you were perhaps far from the truth, I concluded, that you, in common with all men, had an indistinct idea of real and absolute truth, or, in other words, an idea of something absolutely existing." "A good retort," said Julius. "Not a mere retort," said Irene, blushing, "but I merely wish to recall to your memory, the force of your own admission." "I only meant however," explained Julius, "that I was as far as possible from truth, if truth existed at all. Now I own that I have some sort of an idea of truth, but how do I know that it is not as illusory as my idea of existence." "Well," answered Irene, "if it is true that we can be sure of the fact that we perform mental functions such as affirming or denying—and we are agreed I think, that the sceptics themselves can be driven to admit this—what is to hinder our being really certain of the truth that the objects around us are also existing, are real? Why we can neither affirm nor deny without affirming or denying something: and if this be true, the object of our affirmation or denial must be as real as the affirmation itself." "So far," said Julius, "you are clear." "Then let us go a step farther and affirm that when we

form a judgment in our minds, we assert that we exist, for if we did not equally exist, we could not think—affirm or deny. Now, it is, I think, really clear," she went on, "that we are as certain as we exist, that we are distinct from the objects around us; that we are not they, nor they we; and, therefore that we are as certain of the existence of things around us, as we are of our own existence. By saying then, that a truth is that which is, I mean this: that it is true that some things exist; at least that my intellect, my soul exists. But there was a time when my intellect did not exist. Of this truth, I am also quite certain, therefore I call myself a dependent being." "Dependent on what, or on whom?" queried Julius. "On One that is independent, therefore self-existing," answered Irene triumphantly. "When, therefore, I affirm or deny any proposition," said Julius, "you mean I affirm that I exist: a I right?" "Precisely," said Irene, "and you further affirm that you are a dependent being." "I also affirm therefore," continued Julius, "that an absolute independent Being exists." "You affirm," quoth Irene, "that such a Being truly lives, or which is the same, that His existence is the absolute truth—a fact of which, as I asserted before, all men have an idea no matter how clouded." "I am now convinced," said Julius, "that truth is that which is, and that absolute truth is the same as absolute Being. But admitting the existence of such a Being, who impersonates all that is true and good, what can we know of Him? He dwells too far away from us to know anything about Him." "What you say," replied Irene, "may be taken in many senses, but chiefly in two. First, that our reason is, by itself, unable to grasp the fact of the existence of absolute truth impersonated, or what we call God—or secondly, that we cannot understand His nature, or *how* such a being does exist. That we do grasp the fact of His existence, you have already admitted. It is a principle in our nature, without which we could not understand the fact of our existence. For, from childhood upward, we evidently perceive, not alone the fact of our own existence but also that we are dependent beings. In other words, we felt the necessity of a cause of our being. We comprehended that we were creatures; and this we could not do, if we were not, at the same time aware of the existence of our cause or Creator. Our reason, then, such as it exists in us, and with-

out any other help, knows God, or real concrete truth. But if you mean that we cannot understand *how* such a Being can exist, I agree with you and so do the Jews. Reason alone, without some further light from the Creator Himself, cannot fathom the secret of God's existence. It is a necessity of reason that He does exist, but how He exists is not. We Christians, believe that, taking pity on our ignorance, and inability to know much beyond His existence, and some of His more (so to speak) conceivable attributes, God has made a revelation to man, and taught him, by the lips of His own Son, many mysteries of His inner life, and also the secret of this present life, which is so full of uncertainties and afflictions." "These indeed, are strange things to me," said Julius, "and so far you have convinced me. But one word requires explanation, it is 'Creator.' You call God a Creator?" "In this," said Irene, "we agree with the Jews. God is a Creator, or the universe itself must be God. The universe itself cannot be God, for God is unchangeable and spiritual in His essence. Neither can the universe be a mere development, or emanation of Divinity, for then it would be still the substance of God, immutable or unchangeable. We ourselves would be of the substance of God, with our weaknesses, contradictions and continual changes. In this case we could not perceive what we really do, that we are dependent beings in need of another to give us existence. So that Pantheism, as we call this system, is a contradiction of our very nature. If, then, the universe is not God, nor an emanation of the unchangeable One, it must be His creation—that is, something made from naught, by the free exercise of Almighty or unlimited power. God is then a creator and a free creator. For if God was forced to create then there were a force greater than He, viz., necessity; but as God must be infinite, and the master, not the slave of necessity, or cease to be God, so He was free to create or not, as He pleased. But by a person, we understand an intelligent substance enjoying free will. God is therefore personal." "But He had a Son, you said," broke in Julius. "Yes," said Irene, calmly, "but that comes under the teaching of revelation. It would certainly be unknowable without such light. The Jews do not admit this fact, in our sense; and in this the Christian religion chiefly differs from

the Jewish." "Your reasoning is unanswerable," said Julius. "Now, what does your religion say about the problem of life? Man is born naked, lives a life of greater or less suffering, and dies. During life he aspires high, he dreams of a future, and longs for happiness. Every whim is disappointed, and the tomb seems to end his aspirations. Whence this innocent suffering? I must say I have always resented it, and I love to hope with Plato, that our soul is immortal, and destined to be happy, in proportion as it has avoided injustice, in this mortal life." "You follow," said Irene, who was delighted with the noble professions of her questioner, "the promptings of true reason, and the doctrines of the Son of God are eminently reasonable. Our religion teaches us, that man was created perfect in soul and body, and then left free to do well or ill, and take the consequences for himself, and his offspring. He was promised immortality besides temporal happiness if he would do well; if ill, he and his posterity were to be shut out from the unending bliss, for which they were destined, and were also to be condemned to suffer in this life temporal ills and death. The first man chose the worse part, and we, his descendants, suffer the consequences of his fault, just as we may be disposed to suffer from the diseases acquired by our own parents. We are also shut out from the immortality and extraordinary happiness promised our first parents as a reward of their faithfulness. It is thus we explain the origin of evil. Though not bound to do anything to rescue us from this predicament, God, we believe, through pure compassion sent His own Son into the world, in human shape, to suffer, and by his sufferings, to atone for the folly of our ancestors. When once we believe in Him, and try to follow His commands, though we may not suffer less in this life, we are assured that the immortality promised to us in our first parents, but lost by them, will be restored to us as a right. We further believe that a day of general judgment will come, when every injustice will be punished. Then those who, though innocent, shall have suffered wrong in this will life see their enemies humbled; and those who rejoice in others' sufferings here, will mourn and wish they had been more wise. Thus every thing shall be set to rights, and the wise government of the Creator vindicated."

"This," said Julius, "is eminently a rational teaching, and one which, as a philosopher, I would not be ashamed to profess." It was now so late that the need for repose forced itself on the attention of all three; so, with a hearty good night, Julius withdrew from the tent, leaving the happy Irene to enjoy her father's admiration.

Now, some may remark that such a display of philosophic knowledge would be impossible for one so young. But if we reflect that the language Irene and Julius spoke was Greek; that the philosophic systems which so sorely puzzle the modern student—even to translate—were the daily reading of children in the schools of Greece. The apparent impossibility will become a truth. Educated Greeks amused themselves with philosophy as modern scholars often do with the mysteries of the Calculus.



CHAPTER VII.

THE FALL OF THE TEMPLE.

' From the last hill that looks on thy once holy dome
I beheld thee, O Sion ! when rendered to Rome :
'Twas thy last sun went down, and the flames of thy fall
Flashed back on the last glance I gave to thy wall."

—BYRON.

WHEN the elder Simon found that his prey had escaped, he raved furiously, and seemed to feel the loss, even more than his son. In vain he sent his sicarii abroad to bring her to him alive or dead. He sent for Gorgas, who was brought into his presence on a litter, covered with wounds received in his defence against the would-be rescuers of Irene. Simon demanded from the soldier, proof that he had delivered her over securely to the jailor. The unfortunate man had no proof to offer, as all his companions in the fray had fallen. Nor were his wounds sufficient testimony in the eyes of the monster Simon who well knew that Irene was at one time secure in prison. His son had seen her there ; but he loved to shed blood, and he at once ordered Gorgas to be taken away and beaten to death with rods. It was now midnight, and sending for his son and a few other companions, he left the populous part of the city and started off rapidly in the direction of the caves, or sepulchres of the Kings. He undoubtedly foresaw the speedy termination of the siege ; and he knew, in fact, that a great movement of the Romans was imminent ; consequently he was pushing forward with all speed the preparation of these places of refuge for himself, and those whom he wished to save. The caves were some of the vast subterranean passages which ramified everywhere underneath the city. They may be compared to the sewers of Paris, in respect of size and extent ; but what their purpose was is not known with certainty. Besides a

store of food which was furtively conveyed thither, Simon had tools for excavating brought down a long time before he stood in need of them, so that he would be able, if necessary, to dig his way out to a place beyond the reach of capture. But, as the sequel will show, he blundered; for either he was in hopes that the Romans would soon leave the city, after sacking it, and therefore did not accumulate a sufficient quantity of provisions, or the number of his retinue exceeded his first calculations; and he was at length driven from his lurking place through want.

After exploring thoroughly every means of ingress and egress, and studying all their secret passages, the tyrant and his companions returned to the tower, to snatch a few hours' rest before sunrise. It was but a few hours indeed; for the attack on the tower which we have already recorded, began at daybreak. It did not succeed so well as Titus had expected, and was not repeated for several days. Simon kept up his plan of making nightly sorties on the enemy and he accordingly organized one for that very night. At a given signal the gates were thrown open and a body of armed men rushed violently into the midst of the Roman works, fought with all whom they met—often with their own friends—threw burning brands against the balistæ and other engines of the besiegers, and then ran madly back to their shelter. This is the history of every one of those mad spasms of the dying city to prolong its life tenure. They were all alike; without order, hope, or profit.

While Simon was dividing his time between carrying out those petty raids, and providing for his own safety in the caves, Anna was looking after the wants of the convalescent Cyprian, and Irene was nightly brushing away many of the webs of Pagan sophism and ignorance from the intellect of Julius. Every moment at his disposal was spent in her company, sometimes in the presence of her father, and oftener in his absence. Xanthus had changed his manner towards his daughter's suitor since the failure of his *ruse* to repel him, and therefore delayed his departure from the camp. He felt that to interfere with the legitimate affections of the young people would be imprudent as well as cruel. On one of those evenings when Irene and Julius strolled along beneath the filmy

shadows of the fleecy clouds which now and then chased each other athwart the surface of the moon, he stopped abruptly and begged her to favor him with her attention. "I have," he began, "something very serious to say, something that has tortured me from the moment we first met. I have longed for this occasion, yet even now I hesitate to make use of it. But I must say it;" and raising his right hand toward heaven, like one who would take an oath, he said, in accents which caused her very heart-strings to vibrate, "Irene, I love you. I would make you my wife. Fair one, answer me, can you accept and return my love?" For a brief minute there was silence; it seemed to him of years; and then Irene replied, "Julius, you have many claims on my affection; it would be useless to dissemble my love for you; but there is an obstacle to our union." He would have seized her in his arms, so full of joy was he at her answer—he knew of no obstacle—but she raised her right hand, and placing it against him, gently repulsed his amorous caress. He appreciated her sense of delicacy and checked himself. "At least this is allowed me," said he; then quickly taking her hand, and pressing it to his lips, while a feeling of admiration for her modesty filled his noble soul, "I will hear of no obstacles," he said; "we love each other; why may we not be united?" "On your promise," she replied, "that you will never interfere with the practice of my religion, I may become your wife." Again he raised his hand and protested on the honor of a man and a Roman citizen—the highest title he could boast of—that he could not consistently think of hindering any one, much less his wife, from the freest exercise of her creed. She gave him her hand, which he kissed once more. Happy beyond measure, arm in arm, they returned to the tent occupied by Xanthus. Here Julius bade her an affectionate good-night and hurried off to his own quarters.

When she entered, Xanthus was reading a well-worn copy of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. It was a dingy looking bit of parchment which bore marks of frequent perusal. For, as such copies were few, comparatively, those who owned them were frequently asked to lend them to friends, who would read and perhaps make a copy of them. In this way the original was copied, and copies were multiplied and distributed

among the new converts to the faith. "My child," said Xanthus, raising his eyes from the manuscript, "I was just reading the exhortation of our apostle regarding the Lord's Supper. It is a long time since we received the precious food of Christ's blood." "Yes," replied Irene, sitting down beside him. "When at home, we received Our Lord almost daily, but our travels have separated us from Him. I so long to enjoy the happiness of His Presence!" "I do not like to return to Corinth," said Xanthus, "where my property has been confiscated, but I have a relative in Sicily, a cousin, engaged in wine-making, and though we have not met since we were children, he would be glad to see me. As soon as this siege is past, and I shall have visited the grave of your dear mother and brother, we shall set out for Syracuse. There is a bishop there and we shall once more receive the consolations of our religion." Was he forgetting that his daughter might go elsewhere with Julius? Irene was startled by the announcement, and hastened to inform her father of her engagement. "Father," said she, "I must tell you what has just passed; it is my duty to inform you that I have this night promised to become the wife of Julius." "What! so soon!" said Xanthus, with some surprise. "This is a serious matter, in these days of warfare and of persecution. Have you thought of this, child?" "Yes, father," said Irene, putting her arm around his neck, "I have thought of it, but he saved my life, and when he told me that he loved me, I believed him; and when he asked me if I could return his love, I had to tell him the truth; I loved him." "A woman's logic always," said Xanthus, good-naturedly. "But," continued Irene, "we have made no arrangements about the marriage; that I leave altogether in your hands," and drawing down his head, she kissed him. "Quite correct, my child," replied her father, returning her caress. "I will arrange all as soon as possible, though I fear it must be a long time before you are united. Has he promised . . . ? But I need not ask such a question. He is too thoroughly a man to interfere with your religion." "The only condition I interposed," said Irene, "was that I should be free, and in his own way, he swore, as he loved me, to leave my conscience free. But I have no doubt that one day our good Lord will give him the grace of conversion; he is so noble, so good!" "Yes, he is noble," said

Xanthus, "and when man has a good will, God will surely help him to the true path."

When Julius parted from his betrothed, his head was filled with blissful visions of a happy future in her society, and when he threw himself on the floor of his own tent, he at once sank into a peaceful slumber and dreamed of promenades through the sunny meadows of Campania with Irene by his side; of a villa by the yellow Tiber; of boats floating over the glassy surface of the shallow lakes, where the odor of the magnolia and the red lotus entranced the senses, and gold fishes splashed upward and flitted hither and thither clad in robes of liquid sunshine. If he could thus dream on for ever! But a light tap on the shoulder and a whispered password puts a sudden term to his sleep, and brings him quickly to the consciousness of hard work ahead. Yes, the final attack is to be made on the city.

A few days after the unsuccessful attack on the tower of Antonia, twelve Roman soldiers discovered that the Jewish guards in charge of it were asleep—the result of overwork—and hastily sending one of their number for assistance, killed the sleepers, and held their ground against the aroused garrison, until reinforced. With little difficulty the tower was taken; and Titus set his men to raze it to its foundations. Then, utilizing the materials, he filled up the trench which protected the temple, and thus constructed a nearly level roadway from the wall which he had himself erected, to the plane called the outer court, or "Court of the Gentiles." It was by this roadway that the Roman general meant to push his legions into the heart of the city; and the Jews, who hourly expected the first attack, amassed there also every available man under arms to oppose him.

It was to take part in this movement that Julius was aroused from his pleasant slumbers. There is no time to be lost; the legions are already drawn up in columns eight men deep, with three feet between the ranks as well as the files, and await the whispered word of command to advance stealthily to death or victory. Scaling ladders and rams were all in readiness, and before the dawn had drawn back the sable curtains of night, the assault on the defences began. Thoughts of wives, children, lovers were here out of place, and every man faced his stern duty. The Romans were met before they had advanced

half way to the court, and great was the slaughter on both sides when the fighting commenced. Hand to hand conflict with swords, left open no avenue for the display of cowardice. All that day till dusk, and for two days more, the battle continued, until at last on the tenth day of the month Lous, or Ab, the anniversary of the very day on which the temple was burned by the Babylonians, one of the Romans, who was lifted upon the shoulders of another, set fire to one of the windows on the north side. Fanned by the wind the flames rolled through the vast rooms, and in spite of the efforts made by Titus to extinguish them, the magnificent structure out of which our Lord had driven the money-changers, was wholly consumed. A few days before this, as Josephus points out, the daily sacrifice failed, there being no priest to offer it since the death of Matthias. This fact had been foretold by Daniel the prophet centuries before. The Jews, so stubborn hitherto, now lost all courage, the last prop of their faith having failed. Many threw themselves into the flames to perish with their temple, and others fell bleeding on the altars, and all about the inmost sanctuary. When our Lord preached to the Jews, they were in fancied security, they despised Him and put Him to death as a false prophet; but now, in their straits, they were ready to listen to every false prophet who chose to mislead them. One such told them, that if they would ascend upon the temple, God would show them signs of deliverance. Several thousands obeyed, or endeavoured to obey, this impostor and were destroyed in various ways, in, on, or about the temple.

The best part of the city still remained to be taken; and Titus advanced set about the task. He was obliged to raise three mounds against the inner wall, a work which occupied nearly three weeks to accomplish. With little trouble comparatively, he carried the wall by storm, and proceeded to burn everything of value that he could not carry away. As the Roman soldiers rushed about, maddened by resistance, they poured into houses and cellars in search of victims for their rage. A few from the tenth legion with Julius at their head, were about to enter the porch of a marble mansion, when the foremost of them was struck down by some one within. The others hesitated to enter, but when they saw only one man

there and one woman, whom he seemed ready to defend against all intruders, their anger increased to fury. On they rushed, four against one, and straightway two of their number lay prostrate, one of the others was wounded, and Julius alone remained to engage the fierce protector of the hapless female. A severe struggle ensued ; and the young hero fell beneath a heavy but slanting blow, which opened a gaping wound on the right side of his uncovered head. He fell across the prostrate form of her whom he had shed his blood to save, and as he did, a medallion became detached from a chain which was suspended about his neck, and rolled along the marble pavement. Julius put up his sword and looked down upon the two forms ; and his soul was stirred with compassion. "They were surely lovers," he mused ; and then his thoughts wandered back to Irene, whom he had not seen since the siege of the upper city began. The girl seemed to be dead, though she had only fainted, and the youth through wiry, was pale and haggard ; like one on whom some recent sickness had wrought without mercy. He groaned and clutched his sword ; he was not dead. Julius saw the medallion on the floor and picked it up. "Perhaps," said he, aloud, "it is some love token," and opening it, he saw within engraved in the gold, the names Xanthus, Rebecca, Cyprian, Irene. Then that strong man's arm relaxed, the locket fell again to the floor ; his form swayed, and he leaned against the wall unnerved. The sickening thought coursed through his brain, "you have killed the brother of your beloved." It was indeed Cyprian whom he had struck down, and the maiden was Irene's cousin. Just then, Anna recovered, and without delay, she and Julius carried Cyprian to an inner apartment. A few questions put to Anna confirmed the suspicion of Julius, as to the identity of the wounded man, and a close inspection of the wound showed that the skull was not injured and that Cyprian had fallen more from antecedent weakness, than from the violence of the sword-cut. Anna explained how Cyprian had been wounded and left for dead on the street, while endeavouring to secure his sister ; how she had found him and nursed him till he recovered ; and finally, that it was only a week since he had risen from his bed. Julius was both pleased and pained by the recital ; pleased by the bravery and chivalry of the brother of the

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woman he loved ; pained that he should have fallen out so lucklessly, and that he himself should have been the cause of his present suffering. Cyprian, however, soon rallied, and was surprised to see his enemy standing beside Anna, bending over him with a look of deep compassion. "How is this ?" were his first words, "was it not you that wounded me ? or am I still dreaming ?" Anna, for the first time, as it appeared by her amazed look, perceived that her fellow-nurse was a Roman soldier. "I knew not, my Cyprian, that he was your enemy," cried she, drawing back, "but he has acted like a friend since I recovered from my faintness." "Who are you, sir ?" said both she and Cyprian in chorus, as the situation became every instant more embarrassing. Julius smiled, first on Anna, and then on Cyprian, and said with a voice full of that emotion which characterizes earnestness, "I am Julius, a centurion of the Roman army and have the honor to know your sister Irene." "Irene," exclaimed Anna, starting forward a pace and throwing up her hands, while her eyes seemed to re-echo her words. "Irene," said her brother in a choked and muffled tone, as he sprang up and rested on his left arm, and then fell back, too weak to maintain that position. "Do not stir again," said Julius, "I see you are very weak, and I know the cause. Your sister is indeed alive, and also your father Xanthus." "O blessed be Heaven," cried Cyprian, weeping aloud, "blessed be Heaven ! But how is this possible ? Was he not killed in this very street and thrown into the valley of Cedron ?" Anna was by this time bathed in tears, crystal tokens of the joy which the unexpected news produced in her affectionate soul.

Meanwhile the scenes of blood continued without, and it became necessary for Julius to rejoin his troops. Before doing so, however, he caused his new friends to remove as far as possible from the chances of discovery, for this meant death, and then went in search of Titus, in order to interest him in their behalf. This was no easy matter, for so great was the din, so thickly strewn the roads and doorways with dead and dying, so great the number of persons running hither and thither, and so vast the preoccupation of the commander-in-chief, that the prospect of reaching him, and then of impressing him favorably, was gloomy enough. But the manly Julius saw no difficulty in the attempt. He looked straight

ahead at his purpose, and waded through every obstacle. He found the prince, who was willing, anxious even, to be merciful to all save the leaders. This gave a new direction to the thoughts of the centurion. Simon had insulted Irene; he would seek *him* out for special vengeance. As soon as he could he returned to the house of Matthias only to find it in flames. He rushed through the smoke to the apartment which Anna had chosen for their hiding place, and found only Cyprian. Anna was no where to be found. There was no time to lose, however, and the powerful Julius, seizing his wounded friend in his arms, rushed out with him into the street, just as a portion of the roof fell in, sending heavenward a shower of sparks, and volumes of dense black smoke. Once on the street the wounded man, leaning on the arm of Julius faltered along towards what was once the gate of the Essenes, and was thence conveyed back to the rear of the Roman camp, which was now mostly within the lower city, to the North and West. Julius having thus provided for *his* safety, returned to the scene of action, to join in the pursuit of the tyrant Simon, and, if possible to discover Anna, whose loss Cyprian bitterly bewailed. Towards Siloam severe fighting awaited the pursuers, but all resistance was now useless. Simon knew this, and had already taken refuge in the caves.

As Julius and his men came near to the old royal sepulchres, they heard an angry interchange of words, in a language they did not understand, and immediately afterwards, the clash of swords. A wall about thirty feet long, and eight or ten feet high stood here, built of greyish granite. Another like it, though somewhat higher, extended at right-angles with the street on which they were. Three round porphyry columns, surmounted by Corinthian caps, also stood near by, ready to fall from their shattered bases and add to the general ruin. This was all that now stood of the once palatial residence of Macarius, whose wretched fate occupied our attention in a former chapter. Within this ruin a quarrel was proceeding. A large but clumsily-built man, and a small, agile man were engaged in mortal conflict. The small man struck his adversary more frequently, his suppleness giving him an advantage over the giant, who was slow in all his movements. At length the giant made a terrible sweep with his long sword at the other,

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whose arm only and not his head it reached. As he struck, however, he tripped against a sharp stone and fell forward heavily to the ground. Julius now interfered, and asked the cause of the quarrel. The little fellow threw himself at the feet of the Roman, and in very awkward and broken Greek, begged for his life. Then he explained that his name was Ben ; that he had made a bet with the giant, whom our readers will recognize as Gad, and the latter wished to exact payment from a penniless wretch. Gad explained that he had laid a wager with that little rook two months previously, that before the end of the month Eluel Simon would be hid in the caves. "Simon," interjected Julius, his eyes flashing, "Where is he? where is Simon?" "I don't know," said Gad, grinning, "but if he is not dead, or has not escaped, he is in some of the caves underground." "Lay down your arms," said Julius disappointed, and forthwith both were manacled. "You shall soon have a chance to settle your little bet in the Roman circus," he continued, "You both know how to handle your weapons very well."

They then proceeded with their search till night came down upon the ruined city, and veiled its hideous sights from the gaze of man. Then indeed might the few of its inhabitants who still lived remember the awful prophecy of our Divine Lord, that not a stone should be left upon a stone of the once beautiful Jerusalem! The sun which that day went down over the city threw the long shadows of the hills upon smoking ruins and mangled corpses, where once had stood the throne of Solomon. And the fumes of the warm blood of myriads of victims, and the smoke from that vast altar ascended before the Most High a sacrifice of retribution for the crimes of Sion's inhabitants ; crimes the blackest and most inexcusable, perpetrated by the sons of a race on which the choicest gifts of Heavenly grace had fallen in vain for centuries.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE RIVAL'S STRATAGEM.

AFTER the conversation between Irene and her father, about the marriage, they retired to rest, and did not awake till late next morning. Like those of Julius, the dreams of Irene were full of fanciful joy; but in each cup of bliss lurked a sediment of pain, which she was invariably forced to drink. Each particular phase of her dream led to union with her lover; but an obstacle as surely blocked her path. As a consequence, her sleep was not refreshing; and in spite of her efforts to banish the dreams from her memory, next morning, they clung to her with a pertinacity that would seem incredible. Still, she fought them religiously, and would not seek to draw from them conclusions unfavorable or otherwise, to her prospects.

Round about the tent which she occupied, only three decursions with their command were in view. The main body of the army had, as we have seen, approached the city during the night; leaving these few in charge of the sick and wounded. During the long sultry day she and her father sat and looked on from afar at the battle raging in the city; watched the curling smoke as the various buildings caught up the flames, and seemed to toss them from one roof to another with almost the rapidity of lightning; and heard the confused roar—like the sound of the distant sea—caused by the battle cries of the soldiers, the shrieks of frightened children the wailings of despairing women, the moans of dying and the yells of frenzied men, the bellowing and howling of all kinds of maddened beasts, the swish and whirl of crackling flames, the crash and thud of crumbling walls and falling timbers. And they sat, and sat, and looked, and listened, and seemed like statues without life

or feeling ; for the awful grandeur of the spectacle had so wrapped them up and so absorbed their attention, that had the earth quaked beneath them, it could hardly have caused them a momentary distraction.

It was not the mere work of destruction going on before them, that inspired them with awe ; it was the belief that they were witnesses of the fall of the Jewish religion—of the passing away of what was once the chosen worship of the Most High. They knew, as every follower of Christ knew, the prophecy concerning the fall of the city and the temple ; and here was its fulfilment in visible operation before their very eyes ! Day after day they sat there and watched the progress of the ruin ; and though their thoughts were many, the words they interchanged were few. Irene often knelt and prayed for her lover's safety, and longed for his return from the bleeding city. Had she any misgivings for his safety ? At times she feared, and a feeling very like despair wrung her soul and forced a shudder from her frame. A week of anxious waiting had passed by, and just as Xanthus and his daughter were kneeling for their evening devotions, a soldier entered rudely and threw down a piece of parchment before Irene. "That," said he, "is all he had time to write before he died !" He begged me to bring it to you, and to tell you he died still loving you." Mechanically she opened the scroll, and the moment her eyes rested on the writing she screamed and sank to the earth. The soldier disappeared ; and Xanthus raised his daughter and endeavoured to revive her. When he had succeeded partially, he took the scrap and saw on it these words : "Irene, beloved—I am dying, farewell. Julius." "No wonder she was stunned," said Xanthus, as his eyes moistened, and his heart seemed pinched within him. I must leave this place so full of grief for me and mine. "Irene, my lily, we must leave here," he continued, addressing his now waking daughter. "To-morrow shall end our abode in this cursed country." "Julius, Julius, [my love, my own !" cried Irene, whose wild grief now found vent in bitter tears. "You are gone from me for ever, and our love so young ! Oh, why am I thus robbed of you, widowed before our marriage ? Why are we thus separated, torn apart so soon ! Oh, woe is me. Why is Heaven so cruel to me ?" Thus she continued for many hours to mourn

for her lost one, though her father did all in his power to assuage her grief. Wearied at length by excessive weeping, Irene closed her eyes, and slept a treful marrowless sleep, full of horrid phantoms and dreams laden with calamity. Morning came; and in silence she helped her father prepare for their departure—whither she knew nor cared not; for what was there left on earth for her now to love, or live for!

Why did the soldier who had borne this heart-breaking message, depart so quickly? How was it that neither Irene nor her father had seen his face? Had she seen that savage face, she might have doubted the report. It was that of Servius the guard, who, on the night of her escape from the city had seized her, and was prevented by Julius from harming her. Since that night, when his design was frustrated by the centurion, Servius had sighed for revenge. He watched askance the progress of the courtship; and when Julius, unaware of mortal presence, save hers, whom he loved, pledged his fidelity to Irene, and received in return the declaration of her love, Servius was hidden in the undergrowth hard by; and he swore that their union should never come to pass.

The reader is aware that the villain's report was false. The parchment which Servius had so hurriedly left in the tent, and that Irene mistook for a proof of the death of her lover, was a forgery, written by the hand of that base man, and dipped in the blood of some dying wretch within the city's walls. His revenge was complete. Will vice ever triumph thus?

Xanthus hired a few pack horses early in the morning, and placing his baggage on them, set out with his daughter for Joppa, which they reached in safety, and embarked for Syracuse in Sicily. In the meantime, Servius, who was delighted at the success of his villainy, bribed those who had assisted Xanthus to reach the sea-port, to deny any knowledge of his destination, if Julius should inquire for Irene on his return from the sack. Now Julius, though extremely anxious about his bride, was too prudent to trust with any messenger a letter or verbal message to his betrothed; so he kept his own counsel, never once dreaming of the black plots which were ripening in his absence. In a few weeks at most, he reasoned, he would see her; and she knew where he was in any event. He was, nevertheless, often tempted at nightfall to

leave his post and pay her a visit ; but he shrank from too great publicity and suppressed the yearning of his soul. But his strange discovery of Cyprian hastened his return by some days. Several hours elapsed since he had parted from his wounded friend ; and as the pursuit of Simon was for the time being given up, he returned as quickly as possible to conduct him back to the old camp where he had last seen Xanthus and Irene. He was glad to find Cyprian greatly recovered and able to take a hearty draught of rich wine, the first he had drunk in several months. Next day—at last—they set out, the hearts of both equally bounding with joy at the prospect of meeting, the one a bride the other a sister. As they passed along, they came here and there, upon large knots of men, women, and children, all bound in two's by cords, and under the eyes of guards. These were the captives, who were to be sold, and dispersed into every region of the known world. In one place was a body of young men, tall, symmetrical and handsome, despite their hunger-pinched features. They were chosen from among the followers of Simon to grace the triumph that Titus was destined to celebrate in Rome. Their less fortunate companions were either butchered, after the selection was made, or reserved to engage in gladiatorial contests in the arena, and thus to make away with each other, while furnishing sport for the savage spectators. Pagans in those days could find no greater sport than to witness the spectacle of two men carrying each other to death ; and so warped and ferocious had their nature become, that the more cruel and sanguinary the death of the luckless victim, the greater the shout of exultation that swelled to greet the success of the victor.

This was part of the civilization of that age. It was an integral part of the grand old Roman civilization, a civilization that sanctioned murder, suicide and debauchery. There are now living, persons, who mourn over the ruins of the Roman fabric—of its temples, its theaters, its sculptures, its arenas. But these ruins have their lesson. Those of the grand and stately Coliseum drew from Byron only an expression of worship for the great of old ! The dead, but sceptered sovereigns “ who still rule our spirits from their urns,” while the contemplation of their vastness whetted the sarcasm which the sceptical Gibbon so lavishly spreads over false but glittering pages. These men have not learned the

lesson of the ruins. They would, like the imaginative Rienzi, rejoice in the restoration of the material grandeur of Rome. They would collect the scattered stones and cement them once more in their places. They would lift up the fallen arches and retrace the blurred inscriptions. They would again erect "the nameless column with a buried base," replace the statues on their crumbling pedestals, salute the gods in their abandoned temples, burn the incense on forgotten altars. But they forget that these are but, as it were, the body of the storied past, the lifeless body from which the soul has flown. What was that soul, which inspired Roman art and reared the pagan monuments, the stupendous ruins of which catch the eye, and bewilder the mind of the traveller? It was the civilization, the spirit of that age. Let then the dreamers who regretfully cry over the ruins, again people the Coliseum with those who once talked and laughed there, and cheered the gladiator to his fratricidal deed; let them restore the tyrants who strangled human liberty, and reared their throne upon its corpse; let them restore, too, the feasts, the murderous gladiatorial combats, the Saturnalia, the Bacchanalia, when lust and drunkenness were hallowed with the garb of religion; let them, by all means, restore the law of slavery, which gave the master the power of life and death over his less fortunate brother.

We may admire the material greatness of Rome, and praise the genius of many of her children; but why should we regret its fall? Has mankind gained nothing by its fall? In the eyes of those who limit man's hopes and aspirations to earthly things—perishable fame and glory that pass away, we have lost much. But in the eyes of the Christian who believes that there is a higher and endless glory in store for man, we have gained much. Christianity offered this supernatural treasure to the human race. Rome, unprovoked, undertook with its mighty arm to crush Christianity, and for three hundred years kept up its warfare. The result is before us. Paganism crumbled into dust and ruins. Christianity lives! What is it then to us, that the fall of Rome and the triumph of Christianity were coincident? Christians cannot fairly be charged with that fall, which Livy had foreseen in his day—long before the birth of Christ. The vices of its civilization were the true cause of Rome's downfall; and the lesson of the

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ruins is this: that neither intellectual nor material greatness will endure unless built upon a foundation of sound morality.

But this is a digression.

Let us return to our young friends, Cyprian and Julius. The ground over which they had to pass was undulating, the earth covered with broken stones, and here and there lay heaps of twisted iron rods and bolts, charred beams, the remains of injured war machinery, broken swords, shields, spears and bows, scraps of harness, broken scaling ladders, picks, shovels, and long iron hooks, also used in scaling walls. Groups of soldiers were collected near the army wag-gons, some getting their supplies of rations, others sitting or lolling about on the ground, discussing events of the siege, exhibiting, exchanging or bartering trophies taken in the city, or singing snatches of love songs as they played at dice or other games. Into a little valley, through which trickled leisurely a tiny stream of water, the land projected at one place in three finger-like promontories, which ended abruptly, making an almost perpendicular descent from their summit to the rivulet of some twenty feet. On the most northerly of these three was situated the tent which had been occupied by Xanthus. As they approached it, their hearts beat rapidly and their pace quickened, and when at last they descended into the valley, and began clambering up the other side towards the tent, stumbling over stones and brush which became displaced and rolled down into the rivulet with a splash, it seemed to them that the few feet remaining to be traversed had lengthened out into a furlong. In another moment they stand staring grim disappointment in the face. Irene is not there. Xanthus is not there. Their property is not there! The men are puzzled. Julius goes over to a group of men, two of whom had, as he knew, been on duty during his absence. He makes inquiries. They know nothing about the fair object of his search except the fact that she and her father went away suddenly. Then that strong man is for a moment shaken by doubt and fear. He looks at Cyprian. The latter returns the pained and startled look. The lips of Julius are drawn tight together, his brows are knit, his forehead wrinkled, and the look of a stag at bay overspreads his countenance. The softer nature of the Greek is affected differently. His pale face grows paler, the

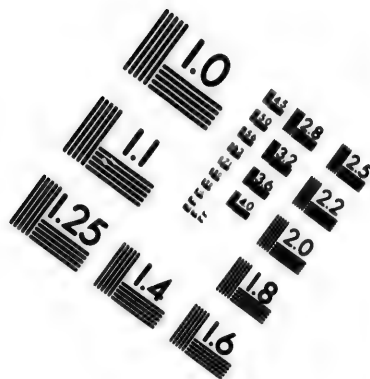
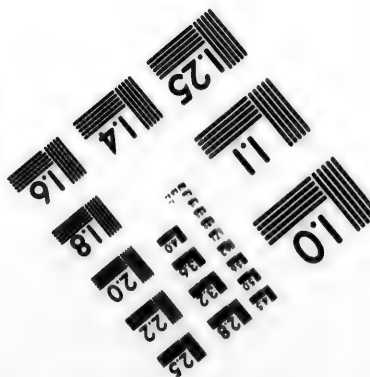
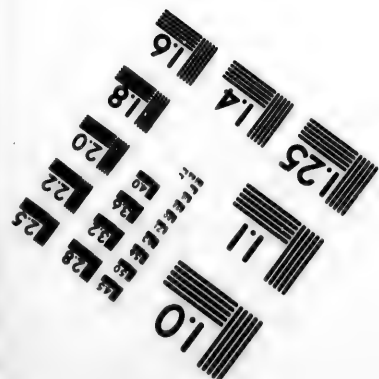
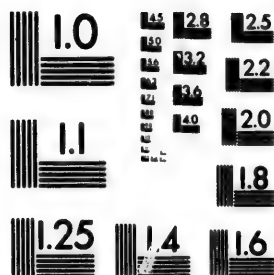


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lustre of his black eye is dimmed by an officious tear, which he, however, instantly brushes away, and the pursing lips disclose the struggle of his affections. Has he been deceived? Why did he trust so easily to a stranger? Yet why should Julius take in him an interest, which had about it every mark of sincerity? Was it all a dream?

Julius on his part, is conscious that Cyprian suspects him, and this dreaded imputation on his honor and veracity, gives him more acute pain than his disappointment at not finding Irene. He can bear it no longer and he breaks out passionately, "Cyprian my friend, I know your thoughts; you have indeed some reason to suspect me, but you cannot believe me a villain. I swear by the God you worship, I have not deceived you, but am myself the victim of treachery. Irene would not deceive me; she has been driven away by an enemy." "Julius," said Cyprian, mastering his feelings, "you have read my thoughts aright, but they are not my convictions. I believe you honest. I need no oath from you to convince me of it. But it is a hard fate to build up a tower of hopes and see it blown down in an instant by a puff of wind, as it were!" The two men then entered the tent and looked about for some relic, some token of the lost one. A scrap of paper, crumpled and blood-stained, lay half-concealed beneath a bit of bark. Cyprian picked it up carelessly and was on the point of tossing it away, when the word "Julius" written on one corner of it, caught his eye, and aroused his curiosity. He called the attention of Julius to it, as he smoothed out the wrinkles and detected further writing. It proved to be the note thrown into the tent by Servius. Xanthus had put it out of his daughter's sight, lest it should for ever recall her bereavement. The mystery was now solved. Julius was almost frantic with rage. His face became purple and the big veins stood out prominently on his forehead. His suspicions were but too well founded; and the one desire of his soul was to discover his enemy and slay him. But where was Irene now? What direction had she and her father taken? These were things he at once set himself to find out.

That evening as a number of soldiers of the legion to which Julius belonged were seated about a camp fire where they had roasted pieces of mutton on spits for their repast, Julius began

to recount his woes. Until now he had said nothing about his love for Irene, but when misfortune overtakes a man his best philosophy forsakes him, and he seeks the sympathy of his fellows. His love, he said, was not the growth of prolonged acquaintance, but the offspring of his first sight of Irene.

"Even in her sorrow, her hair matted with blood and dust, her face, hands, and feet bleeding, she was beautiful," he continued, "but when she recovered from her fright, and on the discovery of her father forgot her pain, she was transcendently lovely! In her society I was happy; in my dreams she was always present and a source of joy; in battle the memory of her gave threefold force to my blows. And now, when I return from the field of victory to claim her as a soldier's bride, she is fled, gone, I know not whither, abducted, perhaps murdered. O gods, if ye have pity, show it now." If Julius had not been beside himself with grief he would not have spoken thus. "The gods never hear the vows of a philosopher," said one of the group, without looking up; "if you were another Paris, in love with another Helen, they would hear your prayer at once, I am willing to wager two *sestertia*." "Yes, I own, fate is unpropitious to true lovers very often; but in the end, true love generally wins its own," said Julius, energetically. "True," said Servius, for he too was present, "I knew of a *questor*, wealthy enough to own a villa near the gardens of Sallust, who fell in love with a lady from Sicily. You must have heard of him too, Julius," said he, as he turned the spit carelessly, "his name was Fabricius." "I don't remember," said Julius, rather gruffly; for since his meeting with Servius in the trench on the night of Irene's escape, the two men regarded each other with the aversion of rivals, and Julius thought he now discovered a lurking sneer in the tone of the man's voice. "Well," continued Servius, dissembling the sting left by the rebuff, "Fabricius wanted to marry this lady. But as the Christians were hiding in all corners, and as she was a Christian, he lost sight of her for a number of years. Somehow she was trapped, however, and as the judge was questioning her about her gods, Fabricius came into the forum and recognized her. She was remanded to prison, where he visited her and offered her marriage on the spot. But she was so blinded, that she preferred to die rather than to worship the

gods of Rome. So he fell to thinking, and ended by joining that new sect of hers, and getting married to her in the prison. The day after that she was again brought before the judge, and condemned to death ; and, do you know, Fabricius went forward and told the judge that he too was a Christian, and would like to be burned with his wife. The judge accommodated him most willingly. Well you see, that man succeeded in finding his true love, and in getting burned up with her too," and the villain here leered upon the man he hated, out of the corners of his blood-shot eyes. Julius was silent ; he was angry, but he could not, without lowering himself, take notice of the ill-concealed insult.

"You do not mean to say," said another of the group, "that Julius will become a Christian, do you?" "Why should he not?" answered another rather testily. "Some of the best men in this army are Christians," he continued, "and some of your best orators and philosophers are joining that society." "I suppose *you* have joined it then?" said one of his neighbors who was finishing a goblet of wine. "And why not?" he replied, fearlessly. "Yes, my man, why should you not?" added Julius, firmly. "I honor the man who, from conviction, joins any school of philosophy. I know something of this new philosophy ('He learned it from a woman,' said Servius in an undertone)—and I have learned to respect its adherents." There was a shade of emotion in his voice as he finished the sentence, barely appreciable, but enough to stir the sympathy of the only Christian in the crowd, and the resentment of the Pagans. Hatred of anything favorable to Christianity was rooted most strongly in the minds of the ignorant; for they among whom alone could be found believers in the gods—the educated classes having no faith in them—imagined that the doctrines of Christianity were immoral and subversive of patriotism.

The soldiers dared not say anything offensive to Julius ; but when they learned that one among them was a Christian, they united in persecuting him, in every way they could. As nothing, they thought, could afflict a Christian more than to revel in tales of his brethren's sufferings, they frequently resorted to this dastardly device. Accordingly, one of their number on this occasion began the recital of a harrowing tale of the sufferings

of the Christians, who were burned in Nero's gardens. "It must have been," he began, "the fellow you spoke of—rather tall, with a sword-cut over the left eye, but otherwise handsome." Some of his hearers nodded assent. "They put sheepskins on him," he continued; "then poured pitch on the wool, and tied him to a stake. Fifty others like him were placed at intervals of a rod around the imperial gardens. Oh! it was a grand sight," he added, as his eyes rolled savagely "when they were set fire to at nightfall! How brightly they burned and lit up the whole space about till you would almost fancy it was day!" "A right glorious sight," shouted all in chorus, "finer than the burning of Rome itself." "When will these good times return," said one enthusiastic individual; low-sized even for a Roman, as he danced about and brandished his sword menacingly. "No matter how soon they may return, though I hope they are very far off," replied the Christian soldier quietly, "those whose blood you thirst for, crooked little coward that you are, will be ready to shed it for the Master they serve, though in any other cause they esteem life very highly. You have, perhaps, already heard," he continued, "that in proportion as the Christians are butchered, their numbers multiply, so that the blood of the martyrs is, as it were, the seed from which fresh harvests of Christians spring up." "'Twas thus," said Julius, "the hyacinth is said to have sprung from the blood of the Laconian youth; yet this is a still greater wonder. I too, trust that the brutal instinct which gloats over the agonies of a fellow-being, persecuted because he worships not *our* gods, will never again find its gratification within the realms of Cæsar." And turning abruptly, he went away toward his own tent. As soon as he was out of hearing, the wrathful little soldier whom the Christian had branded as a coward, advanced toward the latter and said, "You have called me a coward, and I shall have satisfaction some day." "Perhaps," replied he, "you'll stab me in the back, son of the Thersites: but I shall watch you well. Remember, I cannot engage you in single combat—and, if I would, you are too puny—but if you ever come within my reach with hostile intent, I will take from you your chances of drinking Christian blood." The speaker was a large man, and his words, delivered very deliberately and with a trumpet voice, overawed not only the demonstrative and blood-thirsty little soldier, but all his companions.

As the "son of Thersites" moved off muttering curses in an undertone, our Christian was asked by one of the men about him, if it were true that the Christians killed a child to devour at their feasts. "Are the Christians so numerous," he replied, "that they can afford to murder their offspring?" "I should not think so," said the other; "but could they not steal children from their enemies?" "If so, why has no one entered a suit for the recovery of the children stolen?" This settled the matter for the soldier who threw down his sword with impatience. "Thus," said he, "are we made fools of by designing knaves. A moment's reflection only is enough to show how truly you speak. Yet, absurd as it is, I always believed that story about the Christians until now!" "And a moment's reflection would cause all the enemies of the Christian name, to cease hating it," rejoined his companion with energy. "It seems strange that when at home every man may go to the Pantheon and worship what god he chooses; but the Christian is murdered for adoring the God of gods, the only true God. It is certainly not creditable to any man's intelligence, to be stirred up to hatred of his fellow man on the evidence of a mere rumor, started perhaps, by an idle woman or an indigent priest." The soldier bit his lip at this home-thrust; but as he felt that he had acted unreasonably in being so credulous, he was candid enough to acknowledge that he deserved the chastisement. "We are more like children than men," he replied after a pause—"all victims of habit. You Christians are but few," he continued, "and as your meetings are held in secret, you leave room for suspicions against you. You deny our gods, and you have no other god to replace them, or at least we see no image of him among you. It is then hardly surprising that the charge of Atheism is so readily believed against you. Rome has grown strong under the sway of Jove, and you insult his images. Naturally, we resent this." "You speak candidly," said the Christian, who had not expected such frankness from a pagan, "and if all were so open to argument and conviction, we should never have a return of the bloody days of Nero. It is true we worship in secret; but the persecution of our enemies has forced us to adopt that course. We deny the powers of Jove it is true. No reasonable being can worship a god of wood or stone, and as for the divine power

represented by your statues, which power (numen) you call Jupiter, or Venus or Mercury, it is so distorted that what you worship is no god at all, but a creation of your fancy. For instance, your Jupiter is often irascible and lecherous ; Venus is shockingly indecent ; and Mercury is a thief. The God whom we adore has no statue to represent Him ; He is Truth, Justice and Love. He is the Almighty, all-knowing, all-seeing, and can have neither equal nor imperfection. When His name is invoked by the martyrs, the statues of your false gods fall to the ground, as you must have often heard. This cannot happen by the force of magic, as you often contend ; for where could magic find power against a god ? Is it from a weaker god ? or from a stronger god ? Then the gods are divided. There is no thoroughly supreme god amongst them ; and, therefore, they are not gods by any means. That two gods, two supreme and yet equal beings, can exist is absurd. You see then why our people so despise your gods, and show their contempt for them on every occasion."

Silence reigned in the group as the Christian followed up his defence, and all seemed impressed by its clear logic, which necessarily excluded a reply.



CHAPTER IX.

SHIPWRECKED.

"The sky is changed—and such a change! O night,
And storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong!"
—*Childe Harold.*

LITTLE did Julius dream that the enemy of his happiness was in the camp with him, shadowing him at every turn, and anxious to embitter the already rancid cup of his misery. Servius did not dare to show positively his delight at his rival's loss—this might betray him, or, which is the same thing, involve him in suspicion—but by his sneers, whenever the subject was broached he succeeded in annoying his rival. Many among his comrades sympathized with Julius, but most of them only laughed at his sufferings. In his mind a great contest was going on between duty and love, or more properly between his love for his country, and that for his bride. As he strolled away after the scene described in the last chapter, to where he had appointed to meet Cyprian, he revolved the various motives which, on the one hand, prompted him to quit his post to go in search of the woman he loved, and on the other to remain with the army, and thus give up the chance of finding her. Forget her he could not; so he hurried on, unsettled in mind and weary in body by the force of his mental suffering, "Oh! if I had her fortitude," he said at one time. "What a religion that must be which gives its votaries what soldiers would fain possess. They face the lions, they walk into the fire, they bend their neck to receive the stroke of the executioner, and let what misfortune you please fall upon them, they bear it without complaint!"

Julius was a philosopher, who fled to his reason for support; but his reason offered little to quench the fires of his revenge,

or stem the torrent of his rage and disappointment. "Yes," he thought, "if Christinity had only had a respectable origin it would seem so reasonable—it is so reasonable," he said aloud, "it answers the highest yearnings of our nature; but oh! what an origin—a malefactor, a crucified Jew!" And with this thought which scandalized him, he smothered the promptings of grace in his soul. Yet he only followed in the beaten path of ninety per cent of the Pagan world. With it Christianity and Judaism were identical, and the God of the Jews had been overcome by the gods of Rome—what better evidence of the superiority of Jove to Jehovah was needed. Thus they reasoned, those of them who reasoned at all, and the religion which came from Judea and worshipped a dead Jew, as our Lord was called, was despised as something unworthy the least consideration.

At length Julius came to the place of rendezvous, the former tent of Irene and her father. As the two men stood together in earnest conversation, what would strike a stranger was the great disparity between them. Julius was a little above the middle height—broad shouldered, and deep chested. His naked arms and legs displayed a network of well developed muscle that would have excited the envy of an athlete. His complexion was dark, and his hair and eyes black, his forehead high, broad and straight, the nose and chin prominent, and about the mouth sat an expression of stern purpose. Altogether he was a perfect type of robust manhood. The other was much taller, of a light complexion and auburn hair, his eyes were blue, his forehead low, but very broad, and his other features chiselled with the perfection of a model. His frame was lithe and sinewy; and although much younger than Julius, he looked nearly as old, so greatly had his recent sickness and hardships told upon him.

"You agree with me then," said Julius to Cyprian, apparently after a long argument. "I do perfectly," replied the latter. "Your prospects for life would be ruined by such a rash act as that of leaving the army now. Though I would feel happier with you, I can go forth in search of my sister; and if I find her you will know of the discovery, if it be possible for me to reach you by letter." "I shall institute every possible inquiry myself," said Julius, "and I swear by the

immortals, I shall never wed a woman unless it be Irene." They had soon made their arrangements. Cyprian, supplied with a large sum of money by his friend, set out in search of his sister, and Julius returned sorrowful, yet hopeful, to his duty.

By the order of Titus some more time was spent in looking for Simon in the caves, but the attempt was given up, and the General concluded to set out for Rome. Before starting, however, he gave orders to raze to the ground every structure, and every part of the walls still standing, except the towers of Phasaelus, Hippicus, and Mariamne, which would serve as watch-towers and were to be regarded as monuments indicating the place where once had stood the great City of Jerusalem; and a portion of the western wall, which would be a sort of defence for the garrison he intended to leave there. From the scenes of his toils and his victories, Titus turned joyfully away. A conqueror often lingers about the spot which has brought him glory—there is such a fascination in it—but the laurels won by the Roman General were bought at too dear a price to afford him much gratification. His heart was tender, and all through the siege he had seized on every occasion to bring it to an end by peaceful means. He shuddered at the fearful loss of life, and the destruction of property and of art; and only his duty, as he understood it, urged him to push matters to their uttermost limit. When all was over he turned his back on the ruined city with the air of a man who has had to perform an unpleasant task. He first went westward to Cæsarea, and after spending some time there proceeded to Cæsarea Philippi, another port further north where he remained during the winter. Outdoor sports were furnished on all festivals in this city; but what most pleased the mob were the wild beast shows, in which great numbers of Jewish captives became food for the lions.

One day as Titus was reposing after a hearty meal, he was aroused by the vociferous shouting of the soldiers and at once seizing his sword he proceeded to find out its cause. "Simon is taken, Simon is taken." "Long live the General." "To the lions with the tyrant," and such like cries which greeted his appearance explained all. After many days of laborious but fruitless work in the caves where he had hidden, the monster

Simon at length decided to meet his fate. He had endeavored to excavate a passage to some place of safety, but his provisions fell short and to make matters worse he came against a stratum of rock which forbade his further progress. In this extremity he yielded to necessity, and coming out of his cover clothed in white sought at first by this stratagem to escape. But his fate was upon him ; and he surrendered without a struggle to a Roman guard. Great was the rejoicing in the camp, when this man, in whom were concentrated all the passions of a wild beast, was brought up from Jerusalem and presented to the victorious Roman ; but to none was the gratification so complete as to Titus himself, who all along was anxious to have this beast caged, to grace his triumph.

Let us now turn our eyes eastward in order to learn something of Irene and Xanthus whom we have lost sight of for a time. After setting sail from Alexandria favorable winds carried their vessel in the direction of the port they were making for ; but on the third day the treacherous east wind suddenly swooped down upon them, churning up the blue waters of the Mediterranean into a silvery foam, tearing the square sails from the gaskets and tossing the ship about in a manner that foretold speedy destruction. For two days the storm raged and the huge masses of water seemed to blend with the horizon. Immense mountains were suddenly formed, upon whose peaks the vessel danced, when almost instantly they would sink and dissolve to be replaced by a frightful watery valley where she would be walled in like Pharaoh's host, and apparently lost in utter and abysmal depths. Then the wind changed and for a few hours the chop-sea caused the ship's timbers to creak and gape, thus admitting great quantities of water to the hold. Only those who have had the actual experience of such a situation can form an idea of the agony it produces. The wildest fancies of an opium dream are but weak images either of the wild fury of the sea when angered by the gale, or of the mental sufferings of him who feels that the treacherous deep is thirsting for his life, and slowly but surely tearing away from his ever weakening grasp the planks that only serve to prolong his wretched despair.

Sails are torn to ribbons and masts go by the board ; the seams gape wider and wider till at last a huge sea wrenches off the

rudder, and with it several timbers on the port side, just at the watermark. With a strange gurgling sound the waters rush madly through the opening, the vessel stands almost upright for the space of a minute, and then plunges stern foremost into the seething depths, carrying with it all who have not the presence of mind to leap into the sea and thus avoid the suction. Five minutes later some spars and broken planks, with perhaps a few extra bubbles were the only epitaph of those who perished in the foundered ship. Irene and her father were among those who leaped into the sea. Almost at the same moment he was struck dead by a piece of taffrail which was thrown upon him; but Irene was fortunate in finding a spar, to which he clung, ignorant of her father's fate. Throughout the long and starless night she kept afloat, for the sea apparently appased by so many victims soon became calm. For an hour or more she held on with the energy of despair to the bit of wood. Then her thoughts, which had wandered over a thousand objects, chiefly the weird figments of her imagination, took a clearer shape; and with the relaxation of her nerves all the dread reality of her position forced itself upon her clear intellect. Not less dreadful perhaps was the real than the fancied danger; but the courageous resolve of reason to face a danger that is known induces a calm which is ever wanting when the extent of the peril is wholly unknown, or but partially apprehended.

She was now alone in the rolling water. The wind had died away and the only sound audible was the peculiar monotonous lisp of the wave crests, as they curled over and broke into phosphorescent foam. A few drowsy stars seemed to wearily await the dawn, to disappear—they also—from the lonely scene. How long will this continue? How long will she be able to hold on to her frail support? Already a drowsiness begins to creep over her; but she struggles with it, and even anon tightens her grasp on the spar. She calculates the chances of a rescue, when day will dawn, that is, if she be able to survive so long. Where she was, she knew not, save that she had heard some of the sailors say, several hours before the shipwreck, that they were near the isle of Stromboli. But whither had she drifted since? She might be quite near that barren and uninhabited coast, in which case she would perish in sight of land; or she might have been carried out to

sea, far from the course of vessels. Her conclusion was that her term of life was at hand, and indeed she thought that she cared little, now that her father was surely lost. Nevertheless, she did not quite despair. No one ever does, except the determined and insane suicide.

Love of life surpasses all other loves, and grows strong on the very weakness of hope; but Irene, whose religious convictions were ever vigorous, was not altogether without consolation in these supreme moments. Passing in review her whole life, she was confident that she had not seriously offended her Creator. Would He abandon her who had always loved Him, quench her young life just when she was about to taste of its pleasures. But again she thought, would it be a mark of His displeasure if she should perish now, abandoned by the whole world? She rightly reasoned that it would not. "If I die now," she said to herself, with a perfect Christian resignation, "only my body shall perish, but my spirit will go forth to my Redeemer. Welcome death then," she cried aloud, "thou art but the door to Heaven." What comfort doth not Christianity afford its true children. When all hope is lost of a life that seems so fair, it points to the certain possession of another still fairer, in comparison with which the present at its best and brightest, is but a gloomy dreary pilgrimage. From the first sign of danger Irene had recommended herself to God's mercy and to the intercession of her favorite, St. Paul; but far from losing confidence at the apparent rejection of her prayer for safety, she redoubled the fervor of her petition, changing only its form. She had asked for life; it seemed to be denied her; she then asked for mercy and forgiveness.

The excitement resulting from fear and the subsequent exposure were at length asserting their power. She found herself gradually sinking and unable to resist the torpor that crept upon her. Her arms now hung limp across the spar, and her head fell forward upon them. The dawn had far advanced. For a moment she revived, looked vacantly at the long streak of gray light that struggled with the sea on the horizon, muttered a single "Mercy my Saviour," and sank into the now placid waters.



CHAPTER X.

AN ADVENTURE.

AFTER the sorrowful parting between Julius and Cyprian, the latter set out for Corinth, hoping that ultimately his father and sister would return to his birthplace. Nor was this an easy matter in those days. True, the Romans had made good roads throughout every province of the Empire, as a primary step towards introducing their civilization or *barbarism* as the Greeks called it. These roads were as straight as possible, and were composed of sand, gravel and cement, with large stones—often granite—and so well constructed that many of them are in good repair to-day. At intervals of about five miles along these roads, were posts or stations, provided with several relays of horses for government use. While these roads facilitated the march of the Roman legions, and made easy the despatch of news from the uttermost boundaries of the empire to the Roman Senate, they also became the resort of bandits and every kind of marauders. If this was true even in times of peace, it was more strictly true when the East was ablaze with war and sedition. To have money or valuables while travelling alone, was to be made, very probably, a victim of robbery; and to conceal valuables so as to deceive highwaymen, became a forgotten art. Corinth in those days, two hundred years after its destruction by Mummius, had recovered its maritime celebrity, and was now the great western seat of commerce and luxury combined. The ruthless hand of the Roman barbarian had stripped it, indeed, of its poetry in stone; and it now no longer stood foremost in the phalanx of Hellenic bravery. The Achæan Republics dwelt only in history; and the spirit of the virtuous Aratus brooded over

the ashes of a stricken patriotism. Ephesus too, where St. John had fixed his See, was a great seaport, and one of the greatest cities of Asia. Here also Cyprian was acquainted; and though it seemed to him better to go directly to his birthplace, he was on reflection carried away by an unconquerable wish to go first to the great Asiatic capital.

A journey by land would bring him through many cities, in one or other of which it was just possible he might find his relatives; but as we said before, it was exceedingly perilous. Therefore, he concluded to embark from the nearest seaport. The route lay almost due north-east from Joppa to Crete; thence north through the Icarian Sea, passing close to Patmos on the left; and finally north-west through the Straits between Samos and Mycale. It was at that time a beautiful voyage, when the weather was favorable; the numerous rocky isles that crown the *Ægean* coming one after another slowly to view, in such a way that they hardly lost sight of one, when another could be seen faintly in the distance. Some of these islands were very fertile, covered with green fields and luxuriant vegetation; others with dense forests and undergrowth; others again were mere volcanic rocks, upon which grew a few shrubs, with here and there an occasional barkless and limbless pine—a withered and forlorn sentinel, watching, as it were, over the graves of its fallen companions. Unlike the terrible experience of his sister, who had set out only a few days before him, his was a voyage that would have roused any mortal to ecstasies of delight. Indeed Cyprian for a while forgot his misfortunes; and though in the still hours of night he would now and then wake from sleep, and imagine himself among his friends, and lie sleepless, brooding over his disappointment; yet so beautiful was the weather, and so frequent the change of scene, that the morning always brought him peace and oblivion of his trials. On the ninth day they approached the spacious harbor of the Ephesians. As it came in sight, the exalted symmetry of its famous temple captivated the eye of every beholder. The pagan seamen, some from habit, others piously, saluted the statues of Diana, as they did those of Juno in passing Samos—the city, by the way, where they believed that proud goddess to have been born. The bronze statues of Samos were of world-wide fame; for in that island of hardy seamen and skilful arti-

ficers, they are said to have been first made. Many of them studded the pedestals that formed the approach to Diana's temple at Ephesus ; and within and about that great structure—whose remains are to-day but broken shafts and heaps of rubbish, were numerous statues in marble, executed by the finest sculptors of the day. There, too, were exposed the paintings of masters, who sought for fame and pupils, by those quasipious gifts to the sylvan goddess. "Why do you not salute the goddess?" said one observant sailor, who had noticed that Cyprian made no demonstration in honor of Diana—"Every man," he continued, "must do honor to her who protects these shores. I wouldn't like to embark without first paying her my homage, and every sailor is exact in asking her protection." He finished the sentence with a characteristic nautical oath—for sailors then, as now, were strangely given over to the use of expletives. Cyprian, who was musing on the beauty of the magnificent structure which lay between the shore and the city, turned round abruptly upon the man who had disturbed his reverie, and inquired rather playfully who that lady might be? The seaman looked at once indignant, and amazed. "Could any one be so ignorant," he thought. "Impossible; therefore this man is either a philosopher or a Christian, who despises the gods. If I were the captain," said he, when his anger allowed him at length to master words, "I would throw you overboard, blasphemers of the immortals." "Ah! surely you couldn't be so cruel," said Cyprian, chidingly. "I hate all philosophers and Christians," added the sailor, with an inquiring glance at the stranger. "They deny our gods. They are all atheists. We could not live without our gods; we could not in safety sail upon the waters. How often have they saved me, when I invoked them, and I have already hung three tablets in yonder temple as votive offerings to good Diana." Cyprian knew by his manner that this man was at least in earnest, and he therefore ceased to ridicule his worship, and in a soothing voice continued the conversation thus: "Has Diana, my friend, do you think, power to do as she wishes without hindrance from any one?" The man was a little perplexed by this queer question, and replied: "Well, she owes reverence to Jupiter, the King of Olympus." "But," said the Corinthian, "was not Jupiter himself once in danger

from his father Saturn, whom he afterwards deposed?" "I have heard so," said the sailor. "Is Jupiter then the supreme god," continued Cyprian. "Yes," replied the man of the sea. "Well, then," said Cyprian, "Saturn must have been supreme, too?" "Yes, in his time, I suppose," said the sailor, not clearly seeing the abyss this admission hurled him into. "Therefore," continued Cyprian blandly, "Saturn must have had a supreme will, which naught could oppose, else he was in no wise supreme?" The sailor was dumfounded, and remained silent. "Yet," Cyprian proceeded, "Jupiter upsets his government and becomes as powerful as his father. Neither of them is supreme, for Jove in turn may be dethroned by some more powerful son, and so on for ever. Again, you admit that Jove can do nothing against the decrees of fate?" "It is true," said the sailor. "Very well then, fate is stronger than he, that is, again, Jove is not supreme. Now, I believe that a God must be supreme or nothing. There is then only one such, and although you may fancy that Diana or Juno or Minerva heard your prayers, and rescued you often from a watery grave, I believe no such thing. I believe that these gods that you worship have no power; are in fact no gods at all. But I worship and pray to one all-powerful God who rules the universe." This, although very simple reasoning, was yet beyond the capacity of the poor sailor, who rushed off after delivering this final shot at the philosopher or Christian, he could not tell which: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." "Oh!" said the young man when left alone, "what blindness is this, that prevents their seeing evident truths." Yet when he looked again upon the wonderful pile before him, and with an æsthetic eye scanned the temple from the carved pedestals of the numerous columns, which supported the expansive roof, up the fluted shafts, to the carved and horned Ionic caps, the cornices and pediments, and thence in perspective along the magnificent rows of statues and bronzes, and the polished marble wall with its protecting buttresses, he could not help exclaiming—"A miracle alone can convert from their idolatrous habits a people who thus honor a lie." Indeed a miracle in the moral order, that is a miracle operating a change in the established habits of men was necessary to bring a people, whose idolatrous worship was associated with the most graceful forms

and melodious sounds ; with the most beautiful and elegant types in architecture as in all other arts—a worship whose objects danced in every fountain and reposed in every flower, sung by the silver tongue of unrivalled poets and defended by the matchless eloquence, not of orators or sages only, but of story, the living hero-history of a thousand years ! What less than a miracle could turn the Greek from the religion which deified his ancestors and placed his country, as he was taught from infancy to believe, in the foremost rank of civilization ? Yet the fact stands, that the change has been wrought. As our young hero reached the landing place, he saw a vast procession, in which were many young women gayly dressed, and their hair decorated with fillets and wreaths of white flowers ; then a multitude of men, and many children, some of them only partially clad. At the head of this procession, two white steers, also decked with wreaths which seemed to be attached to their horns, were led to execution. The procession entered the temple, while the young women, priestesses of Diana, chanted alternate verses of a hymn, the refrain of which was at times caught up and repeated by the throng. It was the hour for sacrifice ; and Ephesus was paying its wonted honor to its protectress.

At that moment the young man became violently agitated, as he seemed to hear within him a voice which said, “ You are chosen to help destroy this superstition.” For a moment he stood, as if riveted to the ground, and then as he saw that he was attracting attention, he moved on aimlessly to avoid the throng.

His route lay through a wilderness of white marble palaces, with here and there a shrine, the private temple of some rich, and, in his way, pious citizen. Everywhere slaves were employed pruning inviting shade trees, culling flowers from rich and well kept beds to be woven into wreaths and other offerings to the goddess, or training the tendrils of honey-suckle and other sweet-scented creeping plants, to follow various curves, and describe certain fancy or geometric figures upon and between the marble shafts of vine clad arcades. Yet all the beauty and magnificence of the surroundings made no impression upon Cyprian, whose thoughts kept revolving the summons that he had received, to become a minister of Christ.

"It must have been a fancy," he kept repeating to himself—though sometimes loud enough to be heard by a passer-by—as various explanations of the mystery arose in his mind. But how could a fancy take such a hold on him? Was he beside himself? Perhaps his suffering had weakened his mind, and he was now really mad? At this stage of his meditations, and just as he had passed the limits of the city proper, an event occurred which rapidly convinced him that he was really in the full possession of his reason. He was passing along a high wall which enclosed an immense demesne, when he heard a rapid footstep proceeding from around the corner, which was some fifty yards before him. He stood and listened; other footsteps quickly followed, then confused voices, among which he heard this, "kill the child;" a cry of terror, the clash of swords, a hilarious shout, and — He sprang forward to the corner, and to his horror, *there* lay a female slave, half-naked, and drenched with blood, which flowed from a wound in her neck. To her breast she pressed her babe, a mere infant, and was feebly endeavouring to staunch its life blood with a part of her scant clothing. She was dying, but the mother's instinct lived for her child. No one besides was present, the murderers having re-entered the demesne, through a small gate near the scene of their crime. As soon as the woman beheld the young man, her eye kindled, and she made upon her forehead the sign of the cross. This was the pass-word, as it were, by which Christians recognized one another. Cyprian also signed himself with the emblem of the redemption, and as he raised the woman to a sitting posture with her back against the wall, asked her who were her assailants, and what their motive. "Bring water, brother," she replied, and blood poured at each word from her mouth, "baptize the infant, before it die." Like lightning, the young man was away to the nearest fountain, and having wrenched off a shell that was attached thereto by a chain, for public use, he filled it and ran back to do the holy work. He was not a moment too soon, for just as he had said, "and of the Holy Ghost," the last words of the form which he spoke, while he poured the cleansing water on the infant's head, its happy soul passed away, and at the same instant its mother with the word "Jesus" on her quivering lips, fell forward, and closed her eyes on a world that had

literally been to her a vale of tears. She died without a word or a sign that would give a clue to her history ; and it is but a conjecture, that she was murdered on account of her faith. As Cyprian knelt and offered a prayer to the throne of God for the peaceful repose of her soul, he *felt* again, rather than heard that interior voice, no longer doubtful, calling him to battle for his Lord.

He now found himself in a situation at once delicate and dangerous—where his purity and humanity were open to attack. At any moment he might be discovered near a corpse, the red blood that flowed from the wounds of both mother and child sticking to his hands and garments. Of course she was but a slave ; still her master or mistress would value her, perhaps, at a large price. He was a stranger too in the city, and how could he prove his innocence, except, perhaps, by the absence of weapons, if anyone would accuse him of the murder ! In order to clear himself of the charge, and explain his presence there, he would have to confess that he was a Christian, and this would be taken perhaps, as evidence enough of his guilt. Prudence then advised him to leave the spot as quickly as possible.

The persecutions that had raged throughout the Roman Empire during the reign of Nero, and that swept away thousands of Christians, plundered and beggared others, left all who survived under a cloud of villainous suspicions, aroused by cruel and oft-repeated calumnies. Although the death of the tyrant suspended the persecution, still, during the reigns of Galba, Otho and Vitellius, the whole tendency and spirit of the times progressed—or rather went backwards in one direction—towards a total extirpation of the Christians. Like a tiger which becomes furious by the taste of blood, the Pagans grew more and more savage and relentless after each execution, in their hatred of those who denied their gods. True, edicts no longer existed to urge them to deeds of public and legal bloodshed ; but they supplied the absence of these by private insult and abuse, as well as by public prosecutions under false and trumped up charges. Their superstitions were a great factor in this hostile spirit. Taught from childhood to believe in a plurality of gods, or genii having power in various degrees, whether to do good or to hurt them, they sought by the perver-

sion of an instinct natural to every man, to propitiate these numerous divinities, and to retain the good will of as many of them as possible. Therefore, whether they rejoiced or mourned, in their private entertainments as in their public games, whenever they entered or left their houses, when they set out for a pleasure trip, and when they were about to engage in battle; they would propitiate the favor of the gods by some superstitious act of devotion. What then could they think of the Christians who abhorred the incense of the smoking altars, who would put out the undying flames, who rejected the laurel wreaths, avoided the sacred groves, spat upon the images, and shuddered when compelled to witness a sacrifice. The priests seeing that their incomes were in danger, worked upon the superstitious minds of their disciples, and insinuated, that a people who thus disregarded, and disrespected the national gods, were a constant source of danger, inasmuch as they would bring down the wrath of heaven upon the nation.

Those who have read some history know how such arguments, at a much more recent date, have often wrought up the feelings of an ignorant and brutal mob, till they found vent in "No popery" riots; when houses and churches were pillaged and burned, and human beings of all ages subjected to many indignities, even murdered.

Another class of men, too, encouraged this violent spirit, namely, the merchants, whose living depended upon the sale of provisions for the temples, and victims for the sacrifices; and the artificers in brass and stone, who fashioned idols and altars for the many shrines. Besides their superstition, another cause contributed to the spirit of persecution then rampant. While the Jews hated the Christians as a graceless sect, fallen off from Judaism, and were quite willing, in consequence, to join with the Pagans in persecuting them, they were at this time subject to gross insult and often violence throughout the East, on account of their rebellions and frequent insurrections against the Roman power. The antagonism to the Jews extended to the Christians who were still regarded as Israelites, pure and simple, notwithstanding the protests of both parties; consequently when some fresh sedition of Jews sacrificed a number of Pagans, the Christians were at once attacked, and the wrong avenged in their blood. It was therefore almost impossible,

even in times of comparative peace, for a Christian to obtain a fair trial, or to escape with his life if the charge against him were in any way punishable with death. The reader will understand, therefore, why Cyprian was so anxious to avoid detection near the scene of a crime, though his feelings as a man and a Christian, impelled him strongly to risk all, and endeavor to secure decent burial for the murdered ones. Now when a man finds that his life, or even his honor, is in danger, and he feels that although innocent of crime, a web of circumstances surrounds him and makes him appear guilty, he must indeed have strong nerves and an unusually vigorous character to keep his countenance under control and maintain a calm demeanor. Most men sicken at the apprehension of such a situation, and if really placed in it in presence of strangers, betray such emotion as would lead to a grave suspicion, at least, of their guilt. With such complex feelings of anguish and regret Cyprian fled from the street, having first concealed the blood on his hands and clothing with dust, which he sprinkled freely upon them. He had not gone far, however, when he was met by two men, one of whom was very old, the other middle-aged, but both of quiet mien and shabby dress. As they came nearer, the lips of the older one seemed to move alternately with those of his companion as if they were repeating verses one to the other. Cyprian at once recognized by this fact that they were a bishop and his deacon, who thus recited the Psalter of David as they went through the streets. He saluted them, therefore, and told them of his adventure. The older man, who was no other than St. John the beloved disciple, laid his hand tenderly on Cyprian's shoulder, and welcomed him to the Episcopal City of the Evangelist. Instead of enemies he had met with friends, and after a half hour's walk by a circuitous route, he sat down with the Apostle and his deacon to a frugal repast.

The quarter where they dwelt was the poorest part of the suburban city, where the market-gardeners and vine-growers, who supplied the city tables, led their peaceful though laborious lives. Although many philosophers had joined the ranks of the converts, with now and then a professional man, the great majority were of the lower and middle classes of society. By the lower class we mean slaves; for it was they who in those days held the place now occupied in civilized countries.

by the poorest class. Among them were converted Jews, Greeks and Syrians, with many natives of the city or of other parts of Asia Minor. Their language, therefore, was as varied as their nationality; but Greek was the language known or spoken more or less accurately by all, and was consequently used in the services of the Church. After the meal the young Cyprian, at the request of St. John, went into a little room apart, where he related to the Apostle the eventful history of the past year. He told him how his father had often seen the Apostle Paul, who though he had spoken to the Lord regretted not having known Him personally, as did the other Apostles. At the mention of the Lord's name tears stole down the old man's cheeks, and as he raised his eyes heavenward, he seemed to gaze fixedly on the face of Him whose beloved disciple he was. He recounted to the young man some facts in the life of the Lord which are not recorded in the Sacred Books; and as he spoke Cyprian's heart throbbed within him, his throat became dry, and he almost choked for the sobs that involuntarily escaped him. As he often afterwards said, when relating this interview,—no man could fail to love Jesus if he but once heard the story of His life well told. He confessed to the Apostle the strange feeling he had experienced near the famous temple of Diana, and again when he baptized the dying infant. "My son," said the august disciple, "it seems like the voice of the Lord when He called to a certain young man to follow Him, if he wished to be perfect. You will be more like our Master if you take up your cross and follow Him. As He once said, 'the harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few : ' so it is now. We have not enough of ministers to go forth and preach to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death; and to save the converts from the treachery of men like Ebion and Cerinthus, who mislead many and allure them to destruction. You have fought with the arms of the flesh," continued the Apostle, "and you know what sacrifices the soldier must make in a cause, which, however holy, promises only a temporal reward. How much better then would it not be to bear privations which may not be more severe than those you know of, in the cause of Him whose reward is a throne in a kingdom without end?" Cyprian was silent for a time. He feared more the woe pronounced against those who look back,

once they have undertaken to work in the vineyard of the Lord, than the actual sacrifices to be made in His service. Throwing himself therefore upon his knees before the venerable Apostle, he said, "I confess that I am overwhelmed with, as it were, a whirlwind of emotions. I wish to do God's holy will, but I fear this responsibility." "Arise," said St. John, "arise my son, you are our guest, take time and consider your choice. In a week God will show you more clearly what you shall do."

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CHAPTER XI.

ZION'S DAUGHTER A SLAVE.

WHAT meanwhile had become of Anna ? The reader will remember that she disappeared from the sight both of Cyprian and of Julius, on the last day of the siege, and could not afterwards be found. After the departure of Julius to see Titus, in behalf of his new found friends, Cyprian sank into a kind of stupor, which on account of his weakness, took the appearance of death. Fearing the result, Anna crept quickly away from the apartment to search for some water. She had not gone far, before several soldiers, who had entered for purposes of plunder, discovered her and dragged her away to swell the vast number of captives, who were to be sold into slavery. Immediately after the fall of the city, rapid couriers were despatched to Vespasian, and to Rome, to inform the Senate of the victory. The news also spread into Egypt and Asia Minor, together with the report that numberless slaves were to be sold at a cheap rate. Daily, large numbers were subjected to the inspection of buyers, who handled them as they would cattle, in order to make a good purchase. Young, healthy women were most in demand, and consequently brought the highest price.

As the army marched from city to city, after the siege, these prisoners were brought along, and sold as opportunity offered. Escape was, of course, impossible, and many who were tempted to make the trial were at once despatched without mercy. An immense amount of spoil was collected in Jerusalem, and carried off by order of the general ; and much more perhaps was appropriated in private by the soldiery. But the sum of money which poured into the treasury from the sale of the unfortunate Jewish captives, was perhaps far beyond the combined value of all the rest. Anna, with a dozen other females, was

bought by an Egyptian merchant, and after a few days was shipped to Alexandria. Like Irene, she experienced a rough voyage, and, as it was her first on sea, a voyage which seemed to her to have but one possible ending. Nevertheless they arrived in three weeks in the old and wonderful port, which has since witnessed so many naval scenes. While still miles from land, one might see the famous *Pharos*, or lighthouse, standing on the island of that name. This wondrous work, which was at the date of our story already more than three hundred and fifty years old, was indeed a worthy beacon of so great a city as Alexandria. Egyptians, Greeks and Jews, were comprised in its population, which was as famous for the patronage it bestowed on learning, as for the encouragement it gave to commerce and the arts. Its wonderful library, on whose shelves lay in manuscript form the learned labors of all antiquity, to the extent of nearly a million volumes, furnished mental food to the thousands and thousands of ambitious youths, who, generation after generation, crowded its alcoves, to peruse its varied pages, or to listen to lectures given by men who devoted themselves there to a life of teaching and study. This library suffered many times from the carelessness or wanton ignorance of conquerors. Several times it was impaired to the extent of thousands of volumes, which were soon, however, replaced; and it remained for the ingenious malice of Omar the Mohammedan Prince, to utterly destroy this venerable collection, and thereby to produce, as it were, a total and perpetual eclipse of the sun in the learned firmament. The few pages of ancient history, eloquence and poetry, called *the classics*, preserved until our age, by the industry of mediæval monks, are but shreds of the vast store of Greek and Latin literature, which was once the delight of the scholar or the sage. Magnificent temples, models of Egyptian architecture, rose in majestic proportions in many parts of the city, while pointed shafts, obelisks covered with mysterious writing in hieroglyphic characters, stood like rigid sentinels guarding the memory of deeds that once were interesting, though no longer so, to the inhabitants of Egypt's capital. Possessing the chief seaport on the African coast, and one of the greatest of the Mediterranean sea, Alexandria's citizens were wealthy, but not (as we often have to deplore) indolent. From its

wharves were shipped immense quantities of grain to supply the demand of the Roman market ; therefore its merchants were kept active in pursuit of a business which required strict and constant attention. A special interest attached to this city for Christians, who used extensively the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament made during the reign of Ptolemy, two hundred and eighty-five years before the birth of Christ. As Anna neared the city, her heart was filled with various emotions. She was not sufficiently schooled in Christian virtues to bear the vicissitudes of fortune with a calm soul, and from the moment of her capture, and sale into slavery, till she came in sight of Alexandria, she sat or lay weeping and disconsolate. But now as she sat in the bow of the vessel, and gazed upon the new and wonderful sights springing into existence, as it were, before her, she began to be interested. She knew that St. Mark, the Evangelist, had founded a Christian colony in this city ; she had been told it by Irene ; but how was she to discover its location ? Would she remain in the city, or be transported beyond its limits into the desert ? Would she ever again meet a Christian, or have an opportunity of receiving baptism ? Would she be harshly treated, or the contrary ? Would she ever escape ; and, what was certainly only remotely possible, would she ever again meet her friend Cyprian ? " Friend " ! she repeated aloud : how cold the world now seemed ! Was he only her *friend* ? And while she gazed vacantly at the long rows of vessels, some with sails, some without, as they entered the harbor, an inexpressible longing for a distant something—definite only in one respect, that it was far off—associated itself in her youthful mind with the name of Cyprian. The memory of her brother—she had called *him* brother—would not awake such a feeling : nor even that of her murdered father. This strange feeling was an agony, so intense as to blunt the sense of pain, blended with a sweetness, so delicate and evanescent, as to vanish instantly when its presence was detected. It was a medley of contradictions ; a spasm of incongruities ; an aurora of joyous hope, and a midnight of inky despair. Her eyes swam ; her head seemed to whirl and her frame shook as if pierced by a chill wind, when a maddening conviction rushed upon her that she loved Cyprian, and that she and her lover were *never* more to meet ! She

had found and lost him all too soon ; and she was so crazed by the thought, that she was tempted to throw herself into the water, there to end all and forget all, and she might have done so, had not another slave, who read her sufferings in her face, glided softly up to her, and whispered a word of consolation. The voice was strange, and its accents harsh, for the speaker was an Indian woman, dark in color, and only partially acquainted with the Greek tongue. She had often seen the daughter of the High Priest, during the siege of Jerusalem, when she lived, a slave, in the household of Macarias. She was born on the banks of the Indus, of a mother who was also a slave ; and after many changes of masters and several transfers from her own country to Persia, thence to Armenia, and finally to Palestine, she was bought up by the same trader who had purchased our Anna from among the Jewish captives.

After the death of Macarias, his family was reduced to slavery by Simon, while the servants on the contrary, by some freak of the tyrant's will were all set at liberty. The Indian's freedom was of course, short-lived ; but this was to her of little consequence, since she had never enjoyed any of the sweets of real liberty. She was sitting on a coil of rope, when Anna was passing through the ordeal we have endeavored to describe above ; and she instinctively felt that the intensity of the young girl's sufferings would drive her to some rash act. This is why she approached the daughter of the High Priest and said to her, "Lady, I know you are sad, can I do anything to relieve you." Anna was startled, not by the title of lady, but by the fact that she was recognized ; and this by one, who was a total stranger to her. That she was known was certain ; something in the tone of the slave told it plainly. What good would a denial do ? Why show any contempt for this slave, who was now legally her equal. She quelled the sentiment of scorn, therefore, and saw in the dusky maid beside her, a fellow creature with a woman's heart, as well as a woman's intuition. "How do you know me ?" were her first words addressed to the Indian. "I often saw you in the city," replied the slave with a smile, "and I know who you are, I know how you have been suffering ; but many others too have had their afflictions, some less, some more ; and the Lord, who sees your woes, will relieve them if you

trust fully in Him. The bitter wind robs the trees of their clothing in the fall, but sweet spring avenges the wrong, completely replacing the old garments by others, newer and more beautiful." Perhaps Anna would have resented this homily from a poor slave, if it had been delivered in any other tone, or in less figurative language than that employed by Zelta; but there was an eloquence in the expression, and a depth of conviction in the tone, such as she had never heard since she parted from Irene. Besides, the slave used the word "Lord," where she herself would have used "God," a peculiarity which prompted her to ask, "Of what country are you? You are not an Israelite." The woman answered by giving a short history of her life. "I am not a Jew," she continued, "and yet I am not a believer in my country's gods. I believe in a God who is just and merciful, and who will one day take away suffering and punish wrong-doers." Anna was silent; this was very much like the Christian belief, as taught her by Irene. But how could Zelta be a Christian? However, the conversation had diverted her thoughts, and relaxed the strain which had become almost unendurable. She would most willingly have continued the conversation, if she had not been interrupted abruptly, and brutally, by the sailors, whose duty it was to prepare for the landing. The harbor of Alexandria, though very large within, was not approachable at all in rough weather, and only with great caution, even on the calmest day. The channel approaching it was narrow and crooked, and girded by sunken and concealed rocks; on the left was an immense breakwater, and on the right numerous piers built all about the island of Pharos. In their haste to get ready their hawsers and gang-planks for the landing, the seamen crowded and hustled the slaves about, not merely putting them out of their way, but striking them with ropes, or oars, or marlines, just as the fancy seized them. Zelta was struck by one of these brutes and thrown down on the deck, and then kicked by another, while Anna was pushed along into a crowd of slaves, who only laughed at her chagrin, so accustomed were they to receive abuse, or see it inflicted on others. It is no part of our story to describe the landing of the passengers, and the conveyance of them from the wharf to the upper part of the city, into a great square, where those who needed slaves were accustomed

to buy them from speculators, engaged in the business of furnishing them for the markets.

Passing over the interval of some days then, we shall discover Anna settled down in a life of drudgery,—the lot of female slaves—in the suburbs of the great Egyptian city. Here her master lived in opulence, whenever his business allowed him a period of rest and pleasure, in the bosom of his family. He was a man of some education, with a taste for sculpture, painting and music, strictly honest in his business relations, hospitable to his friends, and kind and affable to his slaves, even those engaged in the most menial services. The grounds round about his elegant mansion were laid out in the most artistic manner; sweet-scented-flowers of variegated hues mingled their odors with those of orange and olive; and hedges of quickset and briar flanked the broad and level paths, which meandered in every direction, and converged to a central fountain. This fountain was of bronze, and the figure from whose mouth the limpid water issued was none other than the famous Sphinx. In imitation of the splendor of Babylon and of Memphis, small hanging gardens, which, by-the-bye in our day, have dwindled into baskets, swayed with a gentle motion, in obedience to the pressure of a prevailing west wind. On top of the house was an aquarium or artificial lake, in which tiny fish glided to imaginary depths, or reposed in miniature caves and sea weed. The family consisted of one son and three daughters, whose ages ranged from twelve to twenty. Twenty slaves were constantly engaged about the house and grounds, and as many more attended to the business of their master in the city, or at the quays; Nilos was, in fact, the richest merchant of Alexandria.



CHAPTER XII.

IN THE SIBYL'S CAVE.

"At morn the black cock trims his jetty wing,
'Tis morning prompts the linnet's blithest lay;
All nature's children feel the matin spring
Of life reviving with reviving day."

—*Lady of the Lake*, Canto ii.

THE reader who has taken an interest in Irene must have saddened at the fate which seemed to have befallen her. But our heroine is not yet dead. At the fearful moment when she sank, exhausted and unconscious, a hand was near to rescue her—at least from drowning. Her vessel had been driven northward around Sicily before foundering; and Irene was therefore some distance from the island of Lipari (so famed for its beautiful marbles) when she was descried by one of the piratical craft which plied about the coasts of Southern Italy and Sicily and between the numerous small isles of the Mediterranean, looking out for chance shipwrecks, whose unfortunate victims became objects of their heartless plunder. The crews of such vessels were of course outlaws, and as a rule neither expected nor gave quarter. They generally attacked small ships, overpowered and murdered the crew, and burned the captured vessel, in order to destroy every trace of their crime. Forgetting for the time his usual barbarity, or hoping, perhaps, that the find would give a clue to a more successful discovery, the master of the boat paused in his course, and picked up the drowning female. As soon as she had somewhat revived she was asked her name, and that of the ship in which she had sailed; but she was still too confused to answer those questions properly. Her beauty, however, and the richness of her attire led her captors to believe that she was a prize worth re-

taining; sagaciously reasoning that a large ransom would be paid them for her release. How grievously they miscalculated the reader knows well; but even the shrewdest freebooters are often taken in, employing their greatest resources where the return will be most meagre.

The pirates meanwhile picked up several barrels of fine oil from the neighborhood of the wreck, but not finding anything more profitable—many boxes of ruined spices floated about—they returned to their home at Cumæ, where they landed and delivered the lady into the hands of their confederates. For several days Irene remained in a semi-conscious state; and her progress towards the full recovery of her faculties was gradual, and exceedingly painful. At first she thought that she was still in the water, clinging to a spar, which to her great dismay kept constantly rolling about. Then she seemed to be forced in some way to remain awake, though she needed sleep and rest. Again she was in a ship—she could feel its rocking motion—and hear the water splashing, and the reality of the shipwreck horror became doubtful; it was all a dream; she could not have gone through such an ordeal. Then the thought that it was a dream became a conviction; for were not the beams of the ship's deck there above her head? But these beams seemed of a peculiar kind, and unlike the deck beams of a ship—what were they? Not wood, they were stone; yes, they were stone; and everything about her was stone, and suddenly she perceived that she was in a rocky cave not in a ship. She was safe then, and the shipwreck was a reality. She was now fully conscious: she heard voices—the voices of men speaking in an undertone, while hard by, curiously watching her, in the softened light, was a little girl of apparently some eight or nine summers. What new mystery was this? Perhaps she was in some peasant's or fisherman's dwelling, and this girl was one of the children. Many fancies passed through her brain, many guesses, but none near the truth. She lay a while without the will to rise; then making an effort, she succeeded in gaining a sitting posture; but something prevented her moving her feet. She looked down and behold! she was shackled, chained to her bed. The true situation now partially flashed upon her; she was a captive, but why or where she knew not. "Again a prisoner!" she sighed, and shuddered

at the possibility of being once more in Simon's power. Shame, indignation, and terror struggled for the mastery within her ; but she rose superior to her fears, and asked the child—the men's voices had ceased—where she was, and who were her captors. The child shrank away with a scared look when addressed, and a thickset, villainous-looking man came up from somewhere behind her, and patting her familiarly on the cheek, an action she instantly resented, exclaimed, "Well, pretty one, we have been a long time waiting for a word from you ; but do not be so waspish. How shall we call you ? Where did you sail from ? You are a Greek at any rate, a Diana, I suppose, aye, pretty maiden ?" In spite of his looks, and his gruff voice this man did not frighten Irene ; so she replied with intrepidity, "let me know my position, sir, before you take the liberty of asking so many questions. I would like to be able to thank my deliverers, but—this treatment is worse than death." The man looked at her for a moment with an amused expression, and then taking a key from his pocket, unlocked the chain which held her. He then told her in a few words, that she was held for a ransom by the people (*i. e.* robbers) of Cumæ "The pirates who found you in the sea," said he, "gave you into our charge, and we have nursed you carefully, hoping to know where you came from, so that we might all profit by your recovery ; for you are very wealthy, and we are very poor." And as he pronounced the last word, in a drawling tone, he laughed a loud guffaw ; winked at his comrades, who gathered about her to look at the girl ; now fully revived. The searching glances of the robbers as they crowded around her, and the intelligence that she was to be forced to keep such company indefinitely, drove Irene almost frantic. She so far forgot herself, as to wish she had been left to perish in the deep. She had escaped from the hands of Simon, only to be held as a hostage by men as vile as he, and more powerful, if possible, to do her harm. How her modesty recoiled from the rude gazes of these ruffians ! How her cheeks burned, and the hot tears shot to her eyes, and rained fast down her pale cheeks, and upon her clasped hands, as she bent under the utter hopelessness of the situation. Yet in that hour of sadness, she was not without friends. Through the cloud of her tears burst a ray of divine consolation, which calmed her and saved her reason

from yielding to the strain. The image of her Lord dying, with none about save his enemies, came vividly before her, and with it a feeling of resignation, that no merely natural reflection could produce. In another minute her tears were dried up; the robbers had gone out, and she was alone with the little girl, on whose innocent face the eyes of her returning consciousness had previously rested. Had these men's hearts softened at the sight of unmerited suffering, or was it a special grace from God, in favor of Irene, which inspired them with a sense of shame, and drove them for a time from the presence of the injured girl? Whichever was true, it was certainly providential. The child seemed now to be less afraid, and after a considerable time, spoke to Irene in a language which she could not understand; but which, by means of gestures, conveyed the intelligence, that she too was a prisoner, and desirous of escaping. She advanced towards the mouth of the cave, and, after looking cautiously about, beckoned to Irene to follow. The latter arose from her hard bed of leaves and rushes, and though very feeble, managed to advance to the low arched opening, and look out upon the sea, whence she had been so lately rescued. The robbers were at a considerable distance repairing their boats, or making preparations for another cruise. Irene took advantage of her comparative solitude to enjoy a bath in the cool and clear water, and afterwards to repose in the glorious sunshine. The little girl brought her some fruit, of which she partook heartily, the child talking all the time in the unknown tongue. What language was she speaking? Irene was sure she had heard it spoken before. What a pity she could not understand the child; she could only kiss and caress her, and engage in imaginary conversation with her, by means of such signs as she thought would best indicate her meaning. But how vague, after all, is a language of signs. Two adults, or two children, might have got along better than a grown person and a child; and still, how many a shade of thought, how many emotions would the pantomime fail to convey! Nevertheless, the child was a source of some comfort in the midst of so many afflictions: she was innocent and pretty; and the ease with which she bore her little sorrows, caused Irene to think less gloomily of her own. "There is that infant," she said to herself, "crying piteously one moment, when

she thinks of her home, and following a butterfly with spotted yellow wings; the next, laughing and clapping her little hands when that larger surf overtakes her. She would die shortly if God would deprive her of that levity, which hinders her brooding over the loss of her freedom. Why should I, then, do with myself, what nature keeps her from doing? Why should I repine?" So she fell to contriving the best means of escaping from her awkward position. But the robbers knew that escape was impossible; else, why did they unfetter her? She might stray along the rocky coast, and hide in a remote cranny, but to what purpose? They knew the coast as well as she did the streets in her native city; consequently she would be easily and quickly discovered, or she would starve, or become food for the serpents, which made their home in the crevasses of the rocks. To clamber up their precipitous sides, and gain the woods away up from the coast, would be impossible for any one so weak as she was then, even if one of the party were not on the lookout to ruin the success of such an attempt. Thus she thought on, as she sat there on the sands, and watched the sea birds skimming the placid waters, bathing their pinions in the sunlight, or their bodies in the sea.

As the sun sank in the cloudless western sky, and fringed the forest in the distance with a border of golden hue, the robbers, or some of them, began to return towards their cave. Irene also thought it best to enter, and as far as possible give no occasion to her captors for resorting to cruel treatment. When she turned round, she was surprised at being unable to discover the mouth of the cavern. Stunted trees and sea weed covered the grey or brown rocks as far as she could see, up and down the coast. Deep rifts there were in the bold face of those rocks, and long narrow chasms in many places, in their almost perpendicular surface; but nothing resembling a cave. The cave was there nevertheless; and she found it guided by the little girl, who grew hourly fonder of the stranger; and spent most of her time near her, prattling to her, looking wistfully into her eyes, or showing the pretty stones she now and then discovered on the beach. The child thought it natural that her abductors, gruff, wicked men, could not speak her tongue; but that a beautiful lady could be ignorant of it, puzzled her. That was a mystery—perhaps the

first she encountered. A large dome-shaped boulder poised on two smaller stones, and jutting out beyond the general mass, at a height of ten or fifteen feet from the water level, hid the entrance to the cave from the view of those sailing or walking along the shore. It was only when one scaled the natural rampart, to the level of the boulder, that it was possible to find the arched opening. Sad, yet refreshed, Irene entered; and as the little girl began to build a fire, offered her some assistance. She now saw that the cave was long and very wide, with openings here and there, overhead, one of which answered the purpose of a chimney. This discovery made Irene form a plan of escape. A rope, a dark night, a little sleep on the part of the guards, and all would be easily managed. But the more she thought over this plan, the less feasible it seemed: and at last, she reluctantly abandoned it for another. This was to wander about, going daily farther and farther from the cave, but returning promptly, until she became acquainted with the locality; then to escape to the woods, when the vigilance of the guard weakened, and trust to Providence for rescue. She prayed earnestly for success, and waited her deliverance with confidence.

The robbers had now reached the cave; but of those who went out in the morning only about half returned. They seemed pleased at Irene's conduct, as they did not offer her violence or insult, nor even put her any questions. When they had eaten heartily of roast boar's flesh, they set about playing dice, and drinking heavily. The leader alone drank little, and remained sober; while the others became wild over their cups. One young man among them who appeared to be less than twenty years old, thinking himself unfairly dealt with, abandoned the game; and with uncertain steps advanced towards the captive. She eluded him, however, and started off in the direction of the entry, where she found a man, armed with a long sword keeping guard. At this moment the leader or captain of the gang spoke up, and forbade the boyish libertine to interfere in any way with the young woman. He obeyed sulkily, and sat down; then asked why she was so very sacred altogether. The captain explained that if they wished to get a good ransom for her she must be restored uninjured. The explanation, made in a dialect unintelligible to

Irene, quieted somewhat the man to whom it was made, so that he straightway went sullenly out of the cave, to the great relief of our heroine. She thanked the captain for his kindness, and in reply to his questions—for he at once entered into a conversation—imparted to him as much of her history as she thought it safe to disclose. Though rough in his exterior, the captain was by no means insensible to female charms; and Irene fancied he was using unnecessary condescension, if he meant to be only polite. He drew his bench nearer to her, and motioning to her to be seated, conversed freely about his past life; and furnished, with some solemnity, the information that he was a descendant of Pompey, the famous Roman general. "How then did you come to enter upon such a life as this?" said Irene, who was frightened at her own boldness in expressing the implied reproach. He felt the blow, and a flush of anger passed over his cheek. For some minutes, however, he remained silent, looking down thoughtfully at his sword-hilt on which he beat a tattoo with his fingers; then, without raising his eyes, replied, "One hundred and forty years ago, the pirates who possessed thousands of ships, and swept the seas from the far-off coast of Sidon, to the pillars of Hercules, had become a source of terror even to the stout heart of Rome. Its merchantmen were seized, the supplies of corn cut off, and its coast cities often pillaged and sacked. Pompey, whose wonderful feats of arms had fitted him for the accomplishment of any great undertaking, was given a three years' lease of power to exterminate the pirates. He set about the mighty task as only *he* knew how. He divided his forces, and placed his fleets under able lieutenants; and assuming in person the chief command, he defeated the most powerful enemy the Romans ever faced—yes, annihilated them in three short months. How did the Romans repay this man? How did they reward his victories? They took to their bosoms his cruel foe—that man Cæsar—and banished the descendants of a hero from the soil of Italy. I was but a child when I was told this history by my father, at the fireside of our poor home in Crete; yet the blood of the hero stirred within me, and I swore that I would be ever an enemy to Rome. My father tried to calm me, but I ran away from home, and became a sailor. Then it came to my mind that the best way to punish ungrateful senate and

people, would be to reorganize a piratical association, which it would require another Pompey to break up. How they would then wish they had treated my ancestor as he deserved ! How they would begin to see what he was worth, now that he could not be replaced ! Although the spirit of piracy was broken, I found a few who willingly joined me in the formation of a band, which soon numbered fifty daring men. We cannot do much harm it is true ; but our existence reminds the ungrateful Romans of the services once rendered by their unrequited general." When the pirate had finished speaking, he perceived that his audience was asleep. One by one the bandits or pirates—such as they were—had fallen from the gambling table and lay in drunken stupor, on the floor. Irene too, notwithstanding her strenuous efforts to remain awake and appear an attentive listener, was overcome, and yielded unconsciously to Nature's great restorer. When she awoke it was dawn ; the air was thick and heavy, and the cave resounded with the heavy breathing of the sleeping robbers. She glanced about rapidly, and seeing that no one was stirring abroad, ventured out into the open air. A light gray mist lay upon the water, which lapped, with a steady but gentle motion, the patches of sandy beach, here and there appearing, beyond and between the volcanic rocks of the coast. The only sounds that struck her ear were a faint gurgling near by and below where she stood, caused by the ebbing of the wavelets in and out of a narrow gorge ; and the long steady swish of the untiring surf, rolling along and breaking on miles and miles of coast. Suddenly a single note sounded in the distance ; then another followed, and another as the dew-winged larks welcomed the approach of day. From every bush and covert, other songsters fell into line ; some in high keys shrilly sounding, some in a lower and softer diapason, till the grand concert of feathered musicians was complete, and the forests on the distant peninsula trembled with liquid harmony that resembled the sacred strains of some celestial choir. Then the gray mist began to blush, as if ashamed of its dissonance with its surroundings, and in an instant the sea and sky were a blaze of fire. The sun had pierced the horizon, and a cloudless sky welcomed the majesty of day. Irene's poetic soul was raised up by the gorgeous sight to a contemplation of the Hea-

venly Jerusalem, where the Lamb is the lamp, and there is no further need of sun or moon ; and she sighed for the joys of that happy home—joys to be purchased only by passing through a life of pain and sorrow. Poor-child, she had already had more than an ordinary share of both ; but, thanks to her faith, she turned them to advantage, hoping on for the better things to come. She was so completely lost in admiration of the vision now before her, that she forgot what had been uppermost in her thoughts, such a short time ago. However, after awhile, she recollected that great things were yet to be done, and that she was losing valuable time.

Nowhere was the captain of the brigands to be seen, nor of the young man, who alone had offered her any violence. The occasion seemed propitious, and she at once made up her mind to escape, if possible. She began straightway therefore to reconnoitre, and cautiously to examine and survey the approaches to the cave, from the north and west.

After climbing a considerable distance over large masses of rock, she was able to trace a distinct path, through a gorge, which led upward in the direction she wished to take. The walls of this defile, which widened as they advanced, were thickly festooned with shrubs of various sizes, which grew high up in the clefts of the rock. Perhaps they sprang from seeds wafted thither from across the sea, and deposited in a chink where a few grains of soil had also been carried by the land-breezes, and were watered by the little streams, that oozed through tiny fissures, and trickled down upon the leafy path below. Upward the path coursed, growing more circuitous and narrow as it went, till at last it merged into a sort of tunnel, which turned abruptly to the left, and shut out every ray of the sun. Irene had entered this tunnel before she was aware of it, so eager had she become in her pursuit of liberty ; but no sooner had she advanced to the turn, than the pitchy darkness caused her to pause and consider what was next to be done. To advance might be dangerous, for she knew not whither she might be led. To go back might be fraught with danger, for she now recollected that she had been more than three hours absent from the cave. Just as she was in this quandary a startling incident occurred. Quite near her an owl fluttered his wings, and uttered that peculiar dismal cry which

is said to have often caused the bravest men to shudder. Fortunately Irene was accustomed to sudden alarms, and past a momentary fear, she was not much disturbed. But she heard a second sound, not the hooting of an owl, nor the voice of any beast, but the voices of men. At first it sounded below, then above her. Then it grew more and more distinct, until at last, Oh horror! she recognized the voice of the captain of the robbers and that of the youth who had insulted her. She was certain that they had missed her; and she sank down upon the path, and groped about convulsively for some support. "They are not far off," said the young man to his companion; but Irene heard only the words, "not far off," and thought they referred to herself. She found that the wall to the right was indented, and she moved noiselessly into the niche or rather cavity, where she thought she might escape notice, for she knew that the parties were approaching. "But yesterday, said the captain, "the party left a kid not far from the turn; we shall find her hereabout." They were within a few feet of Irene's hiding place, and that the words, "find her here," meant herself she was quite sure. It was therefore just what she expected, when one of the men began groping in front of her, and, with the words, "here she is," seized something that lay on the rock just at her feet. Had Irene been standing she would have fallen, and probably screamed; but she was in a semi-recumbent posture, and consequently only dropped forward a little, and without a sound. Providentially her voice seemed paralysed or frozen, and the men passed on without the least suspicion that their escaped prisoner was within an arm's length of recapture. In an instant she understood the situation, but it was several minutes before she was able to rise and continue her journey through the unknown cave. She knew that the path had an exit somewhere; she also knew that it would now be several hours before she would be missed, and consequently that her chances of escape were increasing with the flight of every moment of time.

It seemed to her probable, too, now that she knew she had not been the subject of the robbers' conversation, that some enemy was in pursuit of them. The tones of their voices betrayed an uneasiness which would not have been manifest if the persons who were said to be "not far off," were friends.

Between hope, then, and fear, ever and anon directing a prayer for divine aid she glided along through the meandering passage, which turned now to the right, now to the left, gradually ascending, and grew narrower as it approached its term. At last after an arduous, discouraging half-hour's walk, a faint glimmer of light directly ahead revived the maiden's spirits. It grew rapidly brighter as she advanced, and at last betrayed the aperture where the tunnel struggling through a mass of foliage reached the surface of the earth. With a bounding heart Irene approached this barrier, and pulling aside the brambles stepped out upon the bank of a little stream with whose waters the dense weeping willows mingled their verdant tears. She waded across the brook, and immediately knelt down upon its mossy bank to offer the prayer of a grateful heart to her God.

Joyful were the tears she shed, as with folded arms and hair floating in the balmy morning breeze, she looked about on the charming landscape, and felt that once more she was free. Gazing leisurely about her, her eyes wandered back across the little stream; but although she searched the bank, right and left, she could discover no trace of the secret opening to the robbers' cave of Cumæ. Looking then toward the sun, in order to guide herself properly, she started off in a north-westerly direction towards Rome, which she knew could not be distant more than a hundred miles.



CHAPTER XIII.

A ROMAN TRIUMPH.

IT had been the custom of centuries to give every famous conqueror what was called a triumph, or public recognition of the valuable services rendered to the state by his military genius. Hence the greatest honor to which a Roman citizen, down to the days of the Emperors, could aspire, was a triumph. We have already learned how Simon, the cruel tyrant of Jerusalem, was captured and kept chained against the day when Titus would exhibit him in Rome, at the triumph which he longed to celebrate in the capital of the world. In the days of the republic it was necessary to have the sanction of the Senate to hold a triumph; and as a preliminary, the victorious general was obliged to wait at the gates of the city, for the permission of the Conscrip Fathers, to whom he offered his army in token of submission to the commonwealth. These ceremonies were, as a matter of course, dispensed with when the Emperors usurped the right to hold such displays.

The triumph was usually celebrated in the following manner: Arrayed in triumphal robes, and bearing in his hand a branch of laurel, the triumpher first distributed prizes of money and valuables among his soldiers. Then, preceded by musicians, and by the vanquished kings or generals, and other captives, the victor was drawn in a richly adorned chariot by white horses, and followed by his army, shouting songs of victory and praise. In his left hand he held an ivory sceptre and a golden eagle, and the route lay between the Campus Martius, or Field of Mars, to the Capitol, where the victims for sacrifice were slain. After a feast, which was open to all, he was accompanied to his home by crowds of his admiring fellow citizens.

Titus had been associated by his father, the reigning emperor, to the dignity of Cæsar; therefore his triumph would be celebrated conjointly by father and son, and accordingly Vespasian decided to make it exceed in magnificence anything in the memory of living men. We may here remark that no two rulers ever deserved better to be honored by the Roman people. Vespasian was of humble parentage and rose by his own exertions to the purple. As a general, during the reign of Claudius, he gained thirty battles in Britain, thus opening up that little-known island, and completely subduing it beneath the Roman power. In Gaul he was also eminently successful; and as soon as intelligence was received of the disastrous outbreaks in Judea he was sent there by Nero, as the only man on whose valor and skill the nation could rely to quell them. The event justified the confidence reposed in him. He set out at once for Syria, after receiving his commission, and thence for Palestine where he took, in rapid succession, Jotapata, Joppa, Tiberias, Gadara, and several other strongly fortified towns or cities. Having thus reduced the country he made preparations for the siege of Jerusalem, but had hardly entered on the work when Nero was dethroned. After the death of that monster, Galla, Otho, and Vitellius, three emperors each as bad as Nero, were created and assassinated, one after another, within a period of a few months. The commonwealth was in great danger, and the legions, who execrated the very name of Vitellius, offered the purple to the victorious Vespasian. Further, they threatened his refusal of the honor with death; and their choice was ratified by the Governor of Egypt and by the armies in Mysia and Pannonia. Leaving his son to prosecute the siege of Jerusalem, he hastened to Rome, and was received with acclamations of joy by a people who quickly invented for him a genealogy and a descent from the gods. Equal justice for all, and peace for the Christians characterized his short reign; and his frugality and economy in an age of extravagance put to shame the uproarious conviviality of the rich and intemperate. The military exploits of the son redounded to the glory of a father, who was as successful in the cabinet as he had been in the field; and the people were animated with but one soul, as it were, to honor both in the coming triumph.

Titus having disposed of his troops in the East set out for Rome by way of Alexandria, crossing the great sandy desert over which the Israelites, sixteen hundred years previously, had wandered during forty years after their departure from Egypt. He embarked from the great port which was described in a former chapter, in a trireme or boat having three rows of oars, one placed above the other, and reached the port of Ostia in a remarkably short time. Among the few soldiers whom he brought with him as a body-guard, was Julius of the 10th legion, whose bravery and special fidelity had distinguished him during the siege. Simon was brought, heavily ironed, in another vessel, with a number of slaves and an immense assortment of valuable articles taken from the ruins of Jerusalem. On his way to the city Titus was met by deputations from the various civic and political associations, who presented him with flattering addresses; and at the gates by his father and his brother Domitian, afterwards Emperor. The Senate, which had only a semblance of power, decreed two triumphs—one to Vespasian and a second to his son; but they were satisfied with one great festival. The night before the celebration, the city may be said to have remained awake, for the preparations were on so grand a scale that the time was almost too short to complete them. Soldiers were polishing their armor, and citizens were preparing their best apparel for the rare occasion. Favorable points of view in stores or houses were sold, as now a days, and young men and young women looked forward to the opportunity of meeting one another, and exhibiting their good looks or their newest garments. Thieves, too, were preparing to ply a busy trade, and mountebanks and charlatans of all kinds to reap a harvest at the expense of heedless or curious sight-seers.

At length the day was come. The Senators and members of the Equestrian Order met the Emperors at the Walks of Octavian, where Vespasian and Titus appeared, arrayed in purple and crowned with laurel wreaths. From early dawn scores of thousands of citizens of all ages and sexes had streamed into the streets and filled up the various squares, and climbed into windows and doorways, upon porches and pillars, and crowded the walks and roadways, barely leaving room for the procession, which they wedged in on both sides, to pass slowly along

between them. At the sight of the Emperors a shout arose from the nearest beholders, which was taken up and repeated by miles of human voices till the sound resembled, in its undulating cadence and massive volume, the mutterings of distant thunder, or the roaring of the sea. After this hearty reception Vespasian gave the signal for silence, which was so well and so quickly obeyed, that the trickling of the water in the adjacent fountains could be distinctly heard. Then the Emperors, each in turn, offered up prayers of thanksgiving to the pagan deities, and afterwards addressed the people in speeches appropriate for the occasion. The procession then began to move towards the Gate of Triumph, where sacrifices were offered to the false gods, and some food was partaken of by the Emperors and by the troops. All along the line immense structures like platforms, of two, three or four stories, were borne by slaves, of whom a vast number were chosen for this purpose. On these platforms, on the highest part of which was seated a general, or a prominent citizen, or a prince of some captured city, all kinds of embroidery, richly wrought curtains, and silk and purple stuffs of rarest material and design, were placed, as well to exhibit the wealth of the countries whence these things were taken, as to conceal the rudeness of the wooden framework. Exposed to full view, were also on every story or floor, a number of captives, richly clad, and about them, now in confused heaps, now in careful arrangement, but always in profusion, quantities of spices, of silver, of gold and of ivory. Some platforms were devoted to military, and others to civic display, consequently each had a distinct and special character. Paintings and sculpture, articles of domestic use, ornaments made of the precious metals, garments, household furniture, with sacred images of the gods of Eastern countries were placed on some; while on others military weapons and engines, swords and darts, banners, trumpets and battering-rams were conspicuously stacked. Some again were occupied by rare or beautiful animals; but others (and these were most instructive of all) contained representations, partly by means of paintings, and partly by living tableaux or theatrical performance, of the events of the late war. Beautiful countries could be seen ruined by the scourges of fire and famine, the usual attendants or consequences of war. Then the battles

were presented and the corpses of the enemy exposed to view. Mighty walls and battlements would then appear which civilians would regard as impregnable, and almost immediately they would crumble down and be reduced to ruins by the action of rams and other military engines. Then a burning city would be portrayed, with its elegant mansions given over to the flames, its treasures plundered, and its citizens massacred or led into captivity. How sad for the captive Jews this exhibition of their misfortunes to pagan eyes, and how crushing for hearts that were widowed, or bereft of darling children, or kind brothers or sisters, to be compelled not alone to be stung by the bitter recollection of their unspeakable grief, but to relate and sing the story of their fall to an enemy who understood not their language, and could not therefore be moved to compassion by the tale. Well might they recollect the sorrows of their forefathers, who were carried away into Babylonian captivity, and sing in the abyss of their grief :

"We sate down and wept, by the waters,
Of Babel and thought of the day,
When our foe in the hue of his slaughters,
Made Salem's high places his prey ;
And ye, O her desolate daughters !
Were scattered all weeping away."

On one special platform were borne the spoils of the temple ; a table of solid gold, the golden candlestick, with its seven lamps, made after the plan given by the Almighty to Moses, so many centuries before ; and lastly, the copies of the Law of the Jews.

Chief among the captives was, of course, Simon, in whom was centered the liveliest interest. As he was dragged along, nearly naked, with a rope around his neck, his huge frame attracted attention, while his wild and savage look, and his rolling and fiery eyes struck fear to the hearts of his enemies. Blows were rained on him from all sides, and so frequently, that he may be said to have been more dead than alive when he reached the place of execution. Only once did he betray emotion, by speech. It was near the foot of the Capitoline Hill, and just as they passed a brazen statue of Hercules, that he caught a glimpse of a face, that brought back to his memory a

lost opportunity of wreaking his vengeance on a victim. It was for a moment only ; but that moment sufficed to give him the most poignant suffering, in comparison with which his subsequent decapitation was a trifle. When he saw the face he was bent half over, striving to ease the tension of the rope which bound him ; but in an instant his form became erect, and he seemed to grow to twice his real size. He raised a wild yell of fury, and struck out with his hands which were bound together, at the person he had descried in the crowd. Such was the force of his efforts, that he dragged his jailers backwards, and threw one of them to the ground. Another moment, and he was pounced upon and bound more firmly by the soldiers, and driven forward with more violence than before. When he made the attempt to strike the person he had recognized, it was thought by those about to be a foolish attempt at escape ; but one man at least knew the real cause ; for when his attention was drawn by the cry, to the action of Simon, Julius, who was near by, and directly before the Emperor's car, saw that face too, and with no less powerful emotion. A film seemed to pass over his eyes, such as one experiences when he suddenly gazes on a very brilliant light. A cry escaped him also, but it was unheard amid the din ; and even if he had so far forgotten the stern discipline which bound him to his post, as to attempt to move towards the object which so strangely excited him, the dense crowd would have impeded his progress. However, he looked long and steadily over his shoulder, as he was pressed forward, but that face, the countenance of Irene had disappeared. Had she seen him ? Would she recognize him ? Would she still believe him dead ? Did she still cherish his memory ? How, or when, or why did she come to Rome ? These and a thousand other questions appealed in vain for an answer. He thought her countenance was sad, and bore the same marks of suffering as when he found her in the trenches before Jerusalem. His heart beat violently, and thumped against his breast, as if urging him on to some fearful deed ; his mind was full of wild schemes ; and during the remainder of the day, his imagination waded through a sea of troubles and difficulties, and grasped and clung fondly to every possibility his fancy pictured of finding his beloved. That it was she, he was convinced, as there could not be another (so he be-

lieved) such lovely countenance among the daughters of men : and its image was graven on his heart of hearts. Besides, he knew that Simon hated her ; she had told him of the tyrant's cruelty and hate. What else but a desire to kill her, because she had thwarted his designs, could have so roused him at that place, and at that particular moment ? But another proof was added to these, as we shall see farther on. When the procession reached that part of the Capitoline where the temple of Jupiter stood, a halt was called, and the executioners of Simon, the son of Gioras, were despatched to the Forum, there to put the captive to death. They performed their task, and returned to report the fact, as custom had it, to the Emperors. Thereupon other sacrifices were offered up, and the crowds dispersed, the civilians to their homes, and the military to their camp. Thus ended the great event, to commemorate which, the magnificent arch of Titus was erected. It remains standing to this day, an undying monument to him whose name it bears, and one of the few great treasures which have outlived, in a city of ruins, the rage of the barbarian and the envious stroke of time. Passing strange it may seem, too, that the monument, which marks the dispersion of the Jewish people, should alone, of all the great works of that age, escape unscathed. Another fact in this connection deserves our notice. When Vespasian gave orders to dispose of the treasures of the Jewish Temple, he took particular care that the Laws of Moses should be placed, not in a pagan temple, but in the Imperial palace for safe-keeping. Is there not something suggestive in this act of a Pagan Prince ?



CHAPTER XIV.

AN APOSTOLIC ADVICE.

IT was a week since the Evangelist had spoken to Cyprian. During that space the young man gave himself up to serious reflection, and earnest prayer, in order to find out God's will regarding his future. Every day a presbyter of the Church of Ephesus instructed him in the lofty duties of a Christian minister, and pointed out the means necessary to acquire the sanctity such a state requires. Daily, about sundown, the doors of a large apartment were thrown open, through which worshippers singly, or in groups of families, entered, and stood or knelt : the men on the right and the women on the left. When the congregation had assembled, the clergy entered from a small side door, the deacons with their flowing tunics, first in order ; then the priests with white garments and a broad stole, which was crossed on their breasts ; and, lastly, assisted by two clerics, the amiable St. John. Cyprian was given a place apart with a dozen others, some young men, some middle aged, who were preparing more or less remotely to enter the ministry. When the procession reached the altar, at the upper end of the room, the people stood up, and then knelt on the marble floor. The Evangelist, who was very old and feeble, sat during the reading by priests or deacons, of portions of the Old Testament. Then a priest advanced towards the Apostle and received his blessing with bowed head. In his hand he carried a large scroll of parchment, which, when he had reached the farther corner of the large table or altar, he unrolled, assisted by a deacon, and proceeded to read aloud. The people thereupon stood up, for the scroll was a copy of the holy Gospel according to St. Matthew. Once the part read was from the 19th chapter, which records a conversation

between our Lord and a young man, who sought advice from Him. After telling him that to be saved he must keep the Commandments, Jesus replies in answer to a further question, "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." The words seemed to Cyprian to be an invitation to himself, from Christ; and straightway all his doubts and misgivings vanished. He threw himself down upon his knees unconscious of the presence of those about him, and exclaimed, "I follow thee, my Lord." His previous doubts arose from two sources; first, his sense of unfitness, and secondly, his attachment to earthly things, above all his love for Anna. His father had owned a considerable amount of property in Corinth which he might possibly reclaim. He was young, and just of an age when the seductions of passion are most enthralling. His youthful imagination magnified every trifling pleasure into an ecstasy; and his inexperience foresaw only victory in the battle of life where his mature years would, probably meet with crushing disaster and defeat. In every pleasant or amiable acquaintance he beheld a friend; in every friend he sought a confidant in whom he could trust implicitly. How rudely would the finished and polished angles of his childish candor be broken, or ground off by contact with treachery in the very sanctuaries of his love! He had looked upon the comely and smiling form of life as it beckoned to him from afar; how shocking the discovery, when he would draw closer to it, and find it a mass of creeping, corrupting hypocrisy. How many a young man is perverted into a fiend, or, at least a gloomy hater of his kind, by the discovery of this detestable self-seeking, even in high places, which builds up its slimy reputation on a basis of hypocrisy, and by the betrayal of the most sacred and solemn confidences! But Cyprian had not lived to have this fatal knowledge. For him the birds sang as sweetly, and the flowers smelt as deliciously, as if the sin of Eden had not set a limit to their duration. Nature and life abounded with harmony, and his instinct urged him to taste and be filled with the good things about him.

His love for Anna had blazed up into a flame which he could hardly master. Of course he would some day find her, perhaps rescue her from dire distress—then lead her to the altar. What

could he not do for her sake ? In fact he felt that he could not live without her ; it was therefore his duty to return and look for her. Thus for hours he would dream day dreams—as pure nullities as any nocturnal reverie—until distracted in some way and brought back to the region of sense.

He had made no promises to Anna, but he knew that she loved him, and had proved her love by self-sacrifice—the best of all pledges. He loved her too ; he could not deny it. Would it not be cruel to abandon her ? It might, indeed, if he were sure she could be found ; but the answer, even in this event which was all improbable, would be modified by the obligation of abandoning all things, and sundering all ties in presence of a Divine call, to sacrifice oneself in the ministry of Christ. None but they who have passed through the struggle can at all realize the violence and the suffering it induces ; Christ, on the one hand, gently prompting, sweetly urging : on the other hand passion, furiously dragging the soul on, and threatening a life of misery, if its behests be not obeyed. In struggles and doubts of this kind, it was that Cyprian had passed the week of preparation. The words of the Gospel, as we have seen, hastened his decision. He remained kneeling during the discourse of the Apostle, which followed the reading of the sacred text, and arose to receive the Sacred Elements at the communion, with a joyful heart, and a mind impressed with the conviction that the hand of God had set him apart for Himself.

The words of the Evangelist were well chosen to encourage one who had come to the resolve of our young friend. Repeating the words which he had already written in his first epistle, John said to his hearers, “ Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ; which is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof ; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” The Evangelist then dilated upon what many martyrs had suffered for Christ, and the reward they already enjoyed. He foretold, too, how he would soon be called on to suffer for his Lord, and exhorted his hearers to pray for him, “ Love one another, my little chil-

dren," he repeated often, "Love one another, and cause strife to cease; you will be called upon soon again to shed your blood for your faith; and if you have not charity for one another, you will not be able to suffer for Christ. I alone of all the Disciples am now alive, and shortly I shall be called away too. Remember then my teaching, and teach your children as I have taught you. Be obedient to your prelates, lest false teachers seduce you from the faith." When he had finished speaking, preparations were made for offering the sacrifice of the New Law. From a small table a quantity of bread was taken, and placed on the centre of the altar, upon a clean linen cloth. A large chalice was then filled with wine and water, and the Apostle having first offered them up to God, by several prayers, pronounced over them the creative words of Christ, "This is my body—this my blood." Then all fell prostrate upon their faces, and adored the Real Presence of Jesus, in the sacramental Elements. As the Apostle then lifted them up to distribute to the clergy, and people, a heavenly radiance overspread his face; the wrinkles which age had imprinted on his brow seemed to be smoothed out, and the youthful appearance of the Saint suggested that the veil, which separated the real body of the Lord from the vision of corporal eyes, was removed for him, so that he might once more look on the sweet countenance of the Man-God, on whose bosom he reclined on the night of the Eucharistic institution. Then the priests chanted "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God of Sabaoth," and the communicants advanced to the front of the altar.

Oh, who can fancy, at this distance from the Apostolic age, the sincerity and the simplicity of the faith of these early Christians! Living in stormy times, their property, their peace, their very lives in danger at any moment, from the fury of mob violence, or the refined cruelty of legal murder; with what intensity of conviction did they cling to the promises of the Gospel, announced by the lips of the Lord's own disciples. True, there were bad weeds among them; but the persecutions always exposed them, and separated them from the good grain.

When the Communion was past the priests read a great number of prayers of thanksgiving, and then the Apostle pronounced the benediction. After this the clergy retired in the same order as they had entered, and the congregation departed,

several among them having previously deposited sums of money or loaves of bread on the credence table, for the support of the clergy and for distribution to the poor. Next morning Cyprian was admitted to a private conversation with the Evangelist, in which he disclosed his resolution to sacrifice himself in the Lord's vineyard for the good of souls. St. John embraced him, and told him that he was already aware of his decision, and assured him that his call was from God, a privilege granted to very few. "As Aaron," said he, "was called to the priesthood of the Law, so the minister of the Gospel must be called to the altar. He is destined to sit in judgment on his brethren, but also to suffer with his Master, whose priesthood he shares. You do not yet know the wiles of the world ; its deceits, its hypocrisy. Had you yielded to your natural instincts, you would have abandoned your Divine calling. You would have tasted of the sweets of life, and speedily found them bitter and disappointing. Whoever sacrifices himself for his brethren will have a reward, an hundred fold, even in this life, and in the heavenly Jerusalem his joy will know no end." When Cyprian told St. John of his relations towards Anna he was much moved. "It is a case among a thousand," said he, "but she shall yet rejoice in the choice which you have made. Generous though she is, she would resent your betrothal to another woman, but not to the Church of the Lord."

A short time after this Cyprian was ordained a priest, and commissioned to preach the Gospel of Christ, not alone in Ephesus, but in the surrounding country. His zeal and earnestness impressed many of his own countrymen, and often, on the spot where the Divine call was first heard by him, he preached to the crowds who were proceeding to the Temple of Diana ; and became, in the hands of God, the instrument of many conversions to the faith. His fame travelled all over the Asiatic provinces of the empire ; and the learned men and philosophers flocked to hear him, whenever he preached, fascinated no less by the sublimity of the doctrine he expounded than by the elegance of his diction, and the beautiful simplicity of his style. Occasionally some apostate from the faith would interrupt him, but always to his cost. Once, for instance, as the crowd hung on the lips of the young minister, a certain man who was a disciple of the heretic Cerinthus, thus addressed him :—

"Your doctrines are false. My master, Cerinthus, has taught and proved, that God did not create the world, and is not responsible for what happens in it. Jesus is not God, he is a man only, like any of us. If we wish to be saved we must believe in Moses and follow his doctrines; then we shall have a thousand years of pleasure on this earth with Jesus. I pray you, brethren," said he, then turning to the audience, "do not listen to this man for he is an impostor." Cyprian was grieved and annoyed, but kept his temper, and spoke not to the heretic, but to the people: "Men, brethren," said he, "this man denies that God created heaven and earth, but your reason tells you that nothing less than a Supreme and Infinite Power could call into existence what exists now. Again, he says that Jesus was not God; but who, think you, is the better judge of what Jesus was, and claimed to be—His disciple John or this man? John tells us that Jesus is, and claimed to be, the Son of God. If He is not God and He claimed to be God, then was He an impostor. But that He is not an impostor, His miracles clearly prove. Cerinthus, whom this man follows, also taught that the particular laws of Moses were binding on all men unto salvation. But this cannot be, as some of those laws were made for reasons that have ceased to exist. The Commandments certainly bind all men, but until the disciples of Christ command us to obey the ceremonial laws of Moses, we shall hold ourselves free. We preach what we have been taught by those whom the Lord empowered to teach all nations; and therefore it is not lawful to listen to false teachers, who appoint themselves." "Cerinthus was no false teacher," exclaimed the angry disciple, aloud; "he was inspired by the Holy Ghost." "Brethren," replied Cyprian, "if the Holy Ghost would inspire men thus indiscriminately, what would have been the use of Christ, the Son of God, sending chosen men to preach His Gospel? And again, how can any man who contradicts the teaching of the Lord's disciples be inspired by the Spirit of God? Does God, then, contradict Himself?" The multitude cheered the logical answers of the speaker, and drove the follower of Cerinthus from their midst. When the commotion had ceased Cyprian spoke of the life of the heretical Cerinthus, and recalled the circumstances of his tragic death. One day the Evangelist saw him entering the public baths, he drew

back, and in prophetic spirit exclaimed to his attendants, "Come away from this place, the anger of God will destroy it, and with it His enemy." Hardly had they retired from the spot when the building was riven asunder and fell to the ground, burying beneath its ruins the violent apostate. "Thus," said the zealous Cyprian, "perished one of the first disturbers of the peace of the Church. You all know these facts," he continued, "but only those who are true believers see in them the finger of Providence, chastising one who wilfully opposed His revelation."

In order to understand how professing Christians could believe in the Millennium, that is, the doctrine that Christ would reign on earth for a period of a thousand years, with His elect, and allow them to indulge in all the pleasures of sense, we must become acquainted with the sentiments and aspirations of the Jews, at the dawn of the Christian era. The Jews had been always looked upon as a carnal nation, even the Scriptures calling them obdurate or hard-hearted, and "stiff-necked." They were promised wealth above all other nations, though their numbers were relatively few, and victory, through the Messiah, over their enemies, on condition that they kept the law. From these promises, with which the Old Testament abounded, the Rabbis and Scribes inferred that the Messiah would be a powerful ruler, who would subdue the world, and place the Jewish people in the front rank of nations; and so they taught the people. It does not seem to have struck them that, over and over again, the nation violated its pledges and vows; and the idea of a spiritual supremacy for the Redeemer took little or no hold on their worldly affections. What the songs of the Old were in later days to the Spaniard, the fireside tales of future glory were to the crest-fallen Israelite; and as the former sighed for the day when the proud Moslem would be driven into the sea, so the subject of a Roman Præfect cherished the hope that even mighty Pagan Rome would bite the dust before a handful of Jewish striplings. This is why our Lord was rejected although His miracles should have convinced their stubbornness. Many among the first Jewish converts still clung to old forms and superstitions; and when a man of learning and good address broached a doctrine so consonant with their lingering hopes and gradually decaying fancies, as

the Millennium, they were ready to espouse it, and to sacrifice, in its maintenance, obedience to their pastors, and their birth-right to the true heaven. But the fate of the apostate who taught this doctrine, and with it so many other follies, opened the eyes of his dupes to the error of their ways, and brought most of them to a speedy repentance.

Cerinthus was not, however, the only false teacher of the Apostolic age. Simon the magician, was the first—but we shall hear of him farther on. He had a disciple named Menander, who styled himself a messenger from the "Unknown Power." He was a Jew or a Samaritan, and taught that a baptism in his name would confer upon the recipient immortality, even in this world. Many Jews were seduced into this error; but the disappointment they met in his failure to keep his promise, soon shook their faith in him. Another apostate, who claimed to be a disciple of St. Peter, cultivated in his followers a hatred of St. Paul, used water instead of wine in the celebration of the Eucharist, and proclaimed the horrid blasphemy, that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary and not the Son of God. His errors were so insidious, that St. John was induced to write his Gospel to prevent their rapid spread. A strange medley of doctrine was taught by Saturninus and Basilides, disciples of Menander. According to the former, the "Unknown Father" created the angels, who in turn created the universe. Jehovah was one of the bad angels, to dethrone whom, Jesus died. Our Lord, they said, had no real body, but only an apparent one; and consequently did not really suffer. Basilides taught, among other queer things, that the Father created a number of angels, who, in turn, created others, and so on; one set creating another, till there were three hundred and sixty-five sets of angels, each generation having a heaven of its own. The subtle minds of the Greeks were quick to adhere to vagaries like these; and in almost every community of Christians in Asia Minor, a few of these strange heretics could be found, always a source of trouble and scandal to true believers. Sometimes they confined their opposition to argument, but frequently they had recourse to violence; and in the latter case they invariably united with the Pagans or the Jews, in persecuting their faithful brethren. It was the fate of Cyprian to meet with these heretics very often. Into

the churches they were not allowed, when once known to be heretics; but they would assemble in private houses, or in public squares, and there ventilate their impious tenets. If any true believer by accident found himself in the midst of one of these assemblies, he would be compelled to listen to ribald attacks on his clergy, and would learn the lesson which the history of heresy has so forcibly illustrated: that apostates are more zealous to seduce souls than the faithful are to save them.

Once a crowd of people who proved to be followers of Ebion was assembled in the market place of Ephesus, when Cyprian and a deacon were passing by. The crowd was listening to the noisy discourse of a short, wild-looking individual, with a very black beard, a turned up nose, a small upper lip, a pointed chin, the precise physiognomy of a villain. He had broad shoulders and awkward gestures, and spoke regardless of grammar. Now he would raise his voice, and puff out his cheeks, and pour forth a torrent of vulgar abuse on the Catholics. Now he would lower it, and assuming a pious sing-song tone of entreaty, would call on the Father to destroy the idolators, who worshipped Jesus as His Son. "The Son of God will strike you dumb, blasphemer," said Cyprian, addressing the haranguer. No sooner were the words uttered than the man began gesticulating savagely, and leaping up into the air. He could not utter a syllable; and it seemed, moreover, that a devil had taken possession of his body. But the crowd turned madly upon Cyprian and his companion, beat him to the earth and rained blows without number on his prostrate form. They then tied his feet together, and were about to drag him through the streets, when a body of soldiery appeared on the scene, and rescued him from his blood-thirsty assailants.

Some time after this occurrence, as Cyprian rose one day from his knees in the chapel, where he made his daily meditation on Divine truths, a servant bowed and presented a letter. He opened it, and found it to be an invitation to dine at the house of one of the Pagan priests. As this was something very unusual, he showed the letter to his superior and asked for counsel. St. John prayed for a moment, and then told the young priest to go, and further the work of the Lord. Cyprian accepted the invitation accordingly, and set out at the appointed hour. The banquet was one of the best that a rich man could

provide. At the board reclined two Pagan priests, the Præfect of the city and several men of letters. As the viands disappeared the conversation varied from the crops to politics, and from this to philosophic systems; thence to religion proper. The accurate knowledge possessed by one so young as Cyprian astonished them all. After discoursing freely for some time upon the various systems that had become popular for a time, and then sank into oblivion, or contempt, the priest concluded thus: "The existence of so many systems demonstrates two things clearly: first, that the human mind cannot but pursue truth; and secondly, that the most powerful efforts of reason have failed to find it. Portions of truth are to be found in every philosophic school; but so many errors are mixed up with them that the common sense of man finally rejects them. Your Persian sages will cling to their two gods, the one infinitely good, the other eternally bad. Your Epicureans laugh at the idea of creation, and attribute the production of the universe to blind chance; and the Jew will exclude all men except his own countrymen from future happiness. Christianity alone teaches a sound system of philosophy; for it acknowledges the inability of our reason to master all the problems of nature and life. It sheds the light of a Divine revelation over the dark spots, which have puzzled our wise men, and thus clears up the mystery of existence."

Speaking of the founder of the Christian religion, he thus summarized his history:—"Jesus was born in the midst of extraordinary events, and at a time when the tired eyes of all men were looking for a deliverer. He went about during his life doing good—helping the needy, sustaining the poor, healing all infirmities, raising the dead to life, and preaching a Gospel of hope and peace to the lowly—and He died amidst the most terrific commotions of nature which thus testified to His influence." The Pagan priest, whose guest Cyprian was, here rose, and stated in the name of all present, that they hoped the disciple would prove by miracles the power of his Master. "We, whom you see assembled here to-night," said he, "are men of letters, who have wandered through seas of philosophy, and have met only shipwreck and disaster everywhere. Finally, the story of the Areopagite, who became a Christian, set us all studying the doctrines of this new sect. We find it con-

soling, perfect in fact, and just such as a God would reveal. But we find so many divisions among your people that we cannot but hesitate before abandoning our own religion. We have, however, proposed a test, which we believe will be a final argument in favor of whoever accepts it. You remember that a certain man, an Ebionite, was one day preaching when you were passing through the market-place?" "I remember it well," replied Cyprian, who already fore-saw what the test spoken of by the priest would be. "He was suddenly struck dumb, was he not?" "He was," said the priest, not a little astonished at his knowledge of the fact, "and he has ever since been in terrible agony, and no one of his own sect has been able to relieve him. Physicians say his case is beyond their skill; followers of Cerinthus, and Saturninus, and Magus have all attempted in vain to heal him. If you succeed, and it is, with reverence, we would ask the performance of a prodigy, we will be convinced, that your teaching of the doctrine of Christ is the true one." When he had finished speaking, the others signified their assent to the proposal. Cyprian rose up and thus addressed them. "What you ask, brethren, is a display of the power of God, for your special benefit: but as you ask in a reverent, not a cavilling spirit, as did the Jews whom Jesus reproached, a miracle will be operated in your presence. It ought, however, to be enough for you, that a disciple of the Lord is alive and among you to teach His true doctrine. The heretics are but few, though they make great clamor, and the true Christians hold their peace and worship God in silence. The unfortunate man, who lost his speech was blaspheming Christ when he received his chastisement; go, however, bring him here." The man was accordingly brought into the presence of Cyprian. He was a relative of the Pagan priest, and had taken shelter under his roof. As soon as he saw Cyprian he fell on the floor in the most awful convulsions. His face was pale and haggard, and his eyes started from their sockets, and blood flowed from the many cuts he had inflicted on himself in his agony. The guests were terrified, and retreated as far as possible from the sufferer; and even those who were in charge of him shrank from his contact. Cyprian, on the contrary, advanced boldly towards him, and with his thumb made on his forehead the sign of the cross. Not more quickly does the

arrow speed from the bow than the man stood erect, completely cured. His first act was to praise the name of Christ, and throwing himself at the feet of Cyprian he confessed, with tears of deep contrition, his error in doubting the Godhead of Christ. The impression made on those learned men was unmistakable. They felt that a Divine power was in their midst, and they acted accordingly. They knelt, and wept with the joy that only those experience who after a long and perilous voyage, arrive safely at last in port. They kissed the young priest's hands, and begged for instant admission to the society of the faithful. Not only they, but their families and relations, and slaves became Christians, some of whom had the happiness of dying for their faith in the persecution which took place shortly after, during the reign of Domitian.

About this time it happened that the Church of Alexandria had need, on account of its rapid growth, of a great number of priests and deacons, and as Cyprian spoke the Latin as well as the Greek tongue, his translation to the See of St. Mark, would, it was thought, be productive of great good. Accordingly he received the necessary papers of commission and dismissal; and, having heard from Corinth that his father had not returned thither, set out for the capital of Egypt.



CHAPTER XV.

A FRAUD EXPOSED.

A NNA was only a short time in the service of Nilos, the rich Egyptian merchant, when she endeared herself to every member of the family, and also to the slaves except one very black Nubian woman. Nilos, himself, finding her to be educated, soon admitted her to the confidence of the household, and entrusted her with the keeping of certain accounts of a private nature. Although his excited jealousy at first, the natural sweetness of Anna's temper, and her uniform kind treatment of the slaves over whom she was placed, compelled their respect, and soon disarmed their envy. The old Nubian alone was obdurate. She hated Anna at sight, and she continued to hate her in spite of, or rather on account of, her virtuous conduct. It is a notable characteristic of the vice of hatred that it is rarely extinguished by good acts. The victim of this vice cannot see any virtue in the object of its rancor. Every action of the person hated is criticized, and if nothing bad can be made out of a certain act, its motive will surely be assailed, and it will be called hypocritical.

At last, after meditating many schemes of revenge against harmless Anna, the Nubian hit on a plan which promised success. She set about inspiring her mistress with jealousy, "the green-eyed monster, which doth mock the meat it feeds on." Anna was often alone with the master of the house, when making up his accounts, a fact which furnished the Nubian with a basis for her accusations. The mistress was naturally an unsuspicious woman, who only laughed at the hints dropped by the black slave; but as the latter persisted in her strange conduct, the wife of Nilos kept a watch on all the maiden's actions. This conduct of her mistress became exceedingly

vexatious, and subjected her to the scorn of the other slaves, whom the negress informed of its cause. "How impudent," they would say, "of this Jewess to attempt to supplant our mistress!" A very short time, however, was required to dispel the illusion from the mind of every one who knew Anna. But a suspicion once aroused is hard to allay entirely; and as a consequence she was treated by Nilos himself (who loved his wife tenderly) if not harshly, at least with less attention than formerly. This was, of course, prudent and proper on his part; but on the victim of an atrocious slander, it inflicted a deep and lasting wound.

One day when Anna was sitting in a lonesome part of the beautiful gardens, weeping, where she thought no human eye would witness her affliction, she heard a soft tread quite near her. Turning quickly around she confronted Zelta, the slave, whose conversation on the ship had so interested her. This was the first time they met since that day; for, being engaged in different occupations, they were kept too far apart to find such an opportunity. "I am glad to see you, Zelta," said Anna, involuntarily approaching and embracing her. "And I," said the Indian, "am glad, yet sorry, to find you here. You are weeping, and I would gladly dry up your tears, or share your burden." "Alas," said Anna, "you know, of course, why I weep, I have not fortitude to bear up under false accusations, and averted looks." Then, suddenly branching from the subject, she asked abruptly, "Zelta, I would like to know what your religion is; for though I see you burdened often and harshly treated, you do not seem to complain; on the contrary you always seem joyful." The slave smiled, and replied, "I am a Christian, and think you also are one." Anna was surprised and delighted beyond expression. For some minutes she could only weep and kiss the newly-found friend, whom she began to love, as a sister. "I am almost a Christian," she said at length, "but I have not been baptized; and though I try to practise what I know of it, yet I feel that I am a stranger to its spirit and its consolations." "O my dear sister," replied Zelta, "the peace of soul our religion bestows does not exempt us from suffering, and sometimes we are left without consolation for our trial. The Lord knows what is best for us." "What you say, Zelta, is true," answered Anna, "but

tell me how did you become a Christian ; surely there are no Christians in India or in Persia ?" " You are mistaken," said Zelta in reply, " for every country has already received the doctrine of Christ. This I have often heard from the priests, and they cannot be mistaken about the facts." She went on, in her own figurative style, to relate that it was from St. Bartholomew her country had received the faith. St. Simon and St. Jude had preached the glad tidings in Persia and Armenia, and had been put to death with lances and arrows. But the most dreadful of conceivable deaths was reserved for the Apostle of India. He set out from Patalene, at the mouth of the glassy Indus, for Chaldea. Then he sailed up the Tigris to Ctesiphon, and thence by land he went to Armenia. Everywhere miracles marked his progress. The sailors with whom he travelled, were saved from shipwreck by his prayers ; they believed and were baptized. At Albania, he converted the king Polymius and his wife, besides the inhabitants of many cities, who listened to his preaching. But Astyages, brother to the converted king, and a number of others were inflamed with hatred of the Apostle, by the Pagan priests. " This," said Zelta, " was only a few years ago, and I can never forget it, for my poor mother was killed shortly afterwards. She and I were sold by our master to an Armenian, who took us away at once to his own country. We went partly by land and partly by sea, as it suited our purchasers : and thus we were able to visit the great city of Persepolis.

" Almost upon arriving there, I met a Christian priest, who told me of the wonderful spread of the Faith in Persia. Like the sun's rays it pours its light into every corner of the world. We were but a short while in Albania when we heard of the preaching of St. Bartholomew, and we found means to see him. It was the day before his death. Next day his executioners took him to the suburbs, and there beat him with clubs, till all his bones were broken. Then with great pincers they tore the skin from his head and back, and beheaded him with an axe. I could see his murderers from afar, but my mother who ventured nearer, was seized by them, cruelly beaten, and sent bleeding away. Oh, how my heart sickened at the thought of the dreadful pain endured by our apostle ! And then my mother," continued Zelta, " how her wounds

pained her ! She had no permission* to be away from home past a certain hour. Her excuse would not be taken, and she was condemned to be beaten with rods. This was the punishment inflicted on slaves for disobedience. They stripped her to the waist, and placing her on the ground, face downwards, they tied her hands together to one stake and her feet to another, and proceeded to punish her. Oh, how my brain reeled ; my blood coursed madly through my veins, as I looked on that back, already bruised and striped, and I sprang at the first man that aimed a blow at her ! In another moment I had lost consciousness ; I was laid low by a stroke from a club, and the beating proceeded. Slowly, but fiercely, her torturers carried out their bloody work, stripping with their whips her quivering flesh from the broken ribs ; and when I regained my senses, my mother was dead. They had killed her." The slave trembled like a withered leaf in an autumn wind as she finished her narrative, and the vivid memory of the sad event, caused her to rock from side to side, as she pressed her contracted brow, and leaned for support against an ivy-clad buttress of the garden wall. Anna wept, seeing her grief, and spoke (it was her turn now) soothing words to the sufferer. With a fresh outburst of tears, Zelta banished the dreadful memory, and endeavored to resume her former attitude of calm.

After this, she detailed the circumstances of her conversion and that of her mother, her former master, and several others in her native city, where the Apostle had healed many sick, and raised the king's son from the dead. Her second master, she said, gave her to a family which was going to Jerusalem, to join in the Paschal celebration, the year in which the siege by Titus began. As her new master had a great deal of money with him and many jewels, he was harassed by Simon, the tyrant, until he had to give up the last mina. In his extremity he parted with his servants to Macarias for a trifle ; and this was also taken from him by the inexorable Simon. Although Anna grieved for the hardships of the poor slave, such an eventful history had a novelty that interested and instructed her. She had not known the inward wofulness of the state of slavery, the hardships it begets, the wrongs it inflicts, until to-day. Accustomed to treat her servants kindly when she

moved in the circle of her own family, she believed, innocent creature, that the whole world acted in like manner. But she now discovered that the slave was a human tool, to be used, or abused, at its master's will ; so that if he maimed or murdered his slave, no law in any country would call him to account. She stood long on the same spot, pondering over the revelation, evidently unconscious of the presence of Zelta, and wondering what would be the outcome of her own position. She was roused from this reverie by the sound of a bell, which was rung to summon the servants of a certain department to their work. Zelta was already gone. She had anticipated the bell, and not wishing to disturb her friend's meditation, glided as swiftly away as she came.

The Nubian was meanwhile nursing her wrath, and having failed in her first attempt on the character of Anna, she had recourse to incantations. Even to this day, the Africans are strangely given up to this kind of superstition, the absurdity of which is only equalled by the ludicrous shapes it often assumes. For several nights, when the moon was nearly full, the black woman might be seen gliding along the walls, occasionally stopping, then putting something into a wicker pipkin and finally returning stealthily to her quarters. On these occasions she was armed with a long fork, and was looking for toads, spiders, lizards and other kinds of reptiles or insects, which she intended to employ—"for a charm of powerful trouble"—against the object of her hate. Anna, however, went about, as usual, doing her work with even more cheerfulness than before her interview with Zelta ; and in many ways it was quite discernible, that she was buoyed up by some new spirit. The reader, doubtless, has already guessed, and guessed rightly, that she received Baptism, and was therefore, more contented and resigned to the circumstances of her position. Not far from the residence of Nilos, on the slope of a gently rising and verdure-clad hill, there was a mansion, little, if it all inferior to his, in architectural beauty, and gracefully appointed surroundings. Near the entrance to this mansion, stood two enormous elms, which had a sacred significance when their owner was a pagan ; but now they only served to excite that adoration, which the works of nature always beget in rational minds. This was the site of the suburban church of Alexan-

dria. When Arbax became a convert to Christianity, through the preaching of St. Mark, he gave up the largest rooms of his house for the convenience of the little Christian community formed in his neighborhood. Soon, however, the number of those who received the faith increased so vastly, that a dozen such houses could not accommodate them ; and various places were chosen, in and about the city where the holy mysteries could be celebrated and the Gospel preached to the neophytes. During the persecution under Nero, many of these abandoned the external practice of their religion ; some fled from the tortures, and many of those who remained were taken from the chapels and offered the alternative of apostasy or death. When the tyrant died the people breathed freely, and the chapels were once more frequented by worshippers. The residence of Arbax was found convenient by the servants of Nilos, several of whom, it was in time discovered, were Christians. Arbax and Nilos were on terms of friendship, and frequently exchanged visits, which were always taken occasion of to introduce religious topics. Arbax had seen with his own eyes, he said, some of the much talked of miracles performed by the Christian Apostle, even on his way to execution, and in consequence defended his own conversion from paganism to Christianity. Nilos was greatly moved by the accounts his friend gave of the miracles ; " but," he would say, " our magicians and our priests of Isis lead as good and chaste lives as your Christian ministers." " Alas ! " said Arbax, " when I was younger, I, too, believed in the mummery of the magicians, in the sacredness of cats and crocodiles, and in the chastity of the priests of Isis, but later on, I found them to be impostors, all. I know particularly, that a young woman, whom I loved, was infatuated by these priests ; and when, after ten years of ministration among them as a priestess, she was converted, as I was, to Christianity, by an evident miracle, she disclosed the filthy secrets of those designing men. We are children here. If we turn our eyes in the direction of Rome, we may see the temples of Isis resorted to by the foulest men and women of that foul city. It surprises me, Nilos, that you have been so long deceived. As for the doctrine of those men, what do they tell us ? They pretend that they are necessary agents of their gods ; yet the inscription on their temples destroys their

claim. That inscription, as you know, reads, 'I am whatever is or will be, and no mortal has ever raised the veil ;' and presents their best ideal of the Supreme Being. Yet they pretend to raise the veil ! " " Now, do not press me so hard," pleaded the routed Nilos ; " I try to do good as I know best, and I may not fare so badly after all. My wife is greatly under the influence of those men, and I could not begin to quarrel or argue with her, by any means." Poor man, it was the old story of Adam and Eve.

He loved his wife, and was content to please her, and risk his hereafter. He allowed his slaves to go to the house of his friend, to perform their religious duties, and occasionally even ventured to listen to a Christian priest expounding the Gospel. All this pleased him too ; but when, on these occasions, a veil was drawn across the part of the chapel called the Sanctuary, so that none but the initiated could witness the progress of the Holy Sacrifice, he had certain doubts and misgivings, which even the assurances of his friend could not altogether remove. " Why do they conceal from me," he would ask, " that which they expose to my very slaves, to Anna, and even to Zelta ? " The reader of early Church history will understand why ; but for the general reader, we may just mention, in passing, that by the discipline of the " Secret," Christians were forbidden to reveal the doctrines of the Church to outsiders, for fear of contempt : and at the celebration of the Mass, visitors, penitents and catechumens were not allowed to be present at the consecration of the bread and wine, or were prevented by means of a thick veil or curtain from witnessing the sacred rite.

The pagan priests began to fear, from the frequency of his visits, and the intimacy of his relations with Arbax, that Nilos would, sooner or later, abandon their superstitions ; and they accordingly began to exert their influence with his wife, to retain him. In obedience to their commands, she first forbade her slaves to attend Christian worship. Nilos was irritated ; but he was powerless ; such was his peaceful disposition, and his wife's ascendancy over him. Now this occurred precisely at the time when the Nubian had begun to operate her charms on Anna. She had boiled together a quantity of reptiles' blood, poisonous herbs, and the ashes of various kinds of burnt

bones and leaves, and poured a little of the terrible mixture in places where Anna was most likely to stand on it, and she even succeeded in throwing some of the charmed paste on the clothing of her victim, pronouncing the while this awful curse,

" Boil your blood and burn your veins
Seize you fever's direst pains ;
Ministers of hell's abyss, trample on you."

The command of the mistress was the first intimation of the potency of this charm ; but the full benefit was suspended for a time. It was only a week, however, till the Nubian was fully gratified. Anna had gone secretly to the services at Arbax's house, and was discovered when returning by the black woman, who at once reported the transgression to the mistress. Anna was summoned. She was questioned, and admitted the truth of the Nubian's charge. The woman became furious and struck Anna across the face with a cane, which was the only weapon within reach. In a moment the girl was blind, so sudden was the swelling of her cheeks and eyes. "God forgive you," were the only words of remonstrance the martyr spoke, as she turned to grope her way from the apartment. As she proceeded, she was met by Nilos, who, perceiving blood dripping from her hands, with which she had covered her face, stopped her and inquired what had happened. She begged him not to trouble himself about her, and passed on. The next moment he was at his wife's side—she was in a fit of hysterics. Quickly aid was summoned, and remedies applied to revive her. She was smitten, she said, the moment she had struck Anna, and now felt that she had done a wrong. Nilos was vexed, and suggested that reparation be made ; but just as he broached the subject, a priest of Isis entered, as he was accustomed to do, unannounced.

Nilos bowed stiffly, and the priest profoundly—he had studied human nature—and the semi-conscious wife turned her eyes imploringly towards him. "I am come to heal you, my daughter," said the impostor, and he pointed towards the statue of Isis, which the pious wife of Nilos had set up in her apartment by his advice. The priests were in collusion with certain sculptors, and reaped a heavy harvest from the sale of their talking images. As he advanced towards the statue, it emitted a

strange sound, which awed the woman and caused Nilos to start. "Strange," he uttered, partly aloud, as he reflected on the prodigy. "What would Arbax have to say if he were here?" The priest caught the last words, and answered, "Worthy Nilos, I know Arbax, a weak-minded man who blasphemes the mighty gods of Egypt; but Isis proves her claims on our homage from time to time, and honors her priests as you have just seen. The god Arbax worships is a dead Jew." "O Nilos, good master, hear me," shrieked a female slave, interrupting the priest and throwing herself prostrate at the merchant's knees. It was Zelta, who was present at the bedside of the sick woman. The blasphemous language of the priest of Isis was more than she could bear, and she felt herself impelled, as she afterwards expressed, by the flaming hand of an angel, to vindicate the honor of her Redeemer. "O Nilos, noble master," she repeated, as he hesitated, doubtful how to act, "Jesus is no impostor, and though I am but a poor slave, and the lowest worm of the earth, I have more power by my faith, than this priest or his false divinity." "She deserves death," said the priest, betraying the greatest agitation, and fearful of an experiment which had so often proved fatal to pagan imposture. "Beat her to death," said the mistress faintly from the bed, "slaves, seize her." "Quickly," said the priest, forgetting in his anxiety to be rid of Zelta, that he was in another man's house. "Hurry her off, as your mistress bids you," and he seized her by the neck to speed her departure, and struck her with the sistrum which he carried with him. But Zelta was on the alert, and wriggling out of his grasp she again appealed to Nilos to allow her to expose the statue fraud. Nilos was by this time convinced that if there were no imposture to expose, the priest would not have been so sorely exercised by the sally of a slave. Besides, although the mildest of men, he was indignant at the usurpation of his own authority by a stranger; and he forthwith resented it, saying, "Zelta, what is your wish?" Her eyes were bright with tears which glistened as she raised her head to look up to the face of her questioner; and still holding his knees, she replied: "Most noble master, if I but make the sign of the cross—the cross on which our Redeemer shed his blood—that statue will become dumb and fall to pieces." Again the strange noise issued from the statue, this time louder

than before, and everyone in the room, who could do so, retreated terror-stricken towards the door, except the priest and the slave ; the sick woman had become unconscious from fright, the priest raved and shouted at the top of his voice that the goddess would strike any one dead that attempted directly or indirectly to interfere with her. Poor Nilos himself, almost regretted his vacillation, which looked like a compromise, and was on the point of ordering Zelta off to be scourged, when she, raising her right hand to her brow, touched it, and then in succession her breast and her shoulders, saying aloud so that every one could hear her, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,"—the last word was scarcely uttered when the sounds from the shrine ceased, the room trembled, and the statue fell to the ground, not broken into fragments merely, but literally ground to dust. Every one about involuntarily sank upon his knees, while the impostor, the priest Isis, fled from the scene, a man vanquished, exposed, and put to shame by a weak woman. Instead of glorying in her deed the humble slave went away to her employment, and sought, as soon as possible, an opportunity to kneel down and thank God for His vindication of His Son.

Nilos, as soon as he recovered from the shock, approached the bedside of his wife, and found her rigid in the embrace of death. Yielding to his grief he threw himself upon the bed, and alternately wept and kissed those bloodless lips which he would give his fortune to see once more moving, 'if 'twere only to chide him ; then with a breaking heart he turned away, and locking himself up in his own apartment refused to be comforted, or even to eat for several days. All the dread circumstances of that one day kept crowding into his brain, and chasing one another, till his reason seemed about to leave him. At last he knelt, struck by a sudden thought, and prayed to the true God to give him some comfort in his dire affliction. We cannot realize, dear reader, the depth of woe to which a man sinks, who, bereft of the knowledge of the true God, and therefore uncertain about the future, loses, at one stroke, the whole, or the great part of this world's goods, or sources of comfort and gratification. His hopes are for the present life ; his struggles regard the present ; his aspirations never reach beyond the present. When therefore a shadow clouds the lands-

cape of his earthly vision, it chills his spirit and dejects his soul.

When Nilos had finished the petition which he was addressing to the "Unknown God," he arose relieved in a measure, and with his mind made up to find out and worship the only true God, he took part in the funeral ceremonies of his wife.



CHAPTER XVI.

ROME ON FIRE.

“Glühn die Lüfte, Balken krachen,
Pfeiler stürzen, Fenster klirren,
Kinder jammeren, Mütter irren,
Thiere wimmern,
Unter Trümmern;
Alles rennet, rettet, flüchtet.”

—SCHILLER'S *Song of the Bell*.

Glow the air, and beams are crashing,
Pillars tumble, windows creaking,
Mothers fleeing, children shrieking,
Cattle moaning, wounded, groaning,
All is running, saving, flying.—*Translation*.

WHEN Julius saw Irene's face among the onlookers at the triumphal procession, he was, as we have seen, dazed; and when he looked a second time she had disappeared. Did she see him? Her journey towards Rome, from the moment of her escape from the cave, was full of toil, though made without any real adventure. The land in this part of Italy is hilly, and rises gradually from the sea towards the north and east. It is picturesquely traversed by numerous little streams and brooks, all emptying finally into the Volturno, whose rocky bed is generally dry for several months in the year. During the first zest of her freedom from bondage, Irene walked quickly along, and had covered many Roman miles before the combined effects of her recent sickness, and the direct sunlight, made themselves felt. She was wandering through uncultivated lands and occasional tracts of heavy forest, when she became suddenly aware of her weakness. At once she slackened her pace, till she reached a field fresh ploughed and sat down to rest. At a little distance she descried some men working with oxen and a rude plough, made simply

of two pieces of wood, which crossed each other at a very acute angle. This implement, though not so elaborate as our modern plough, stirred up the earth as well as the men of that day and that country, thought useful or necessary. When they neared that part of the field where Irene sat she spoke to them, and asked if she could remain at their house for a time, until the heat of the day would be past. One of the men pointed to a copse at a little distance to the left, and told her to go thither and speak with the woman, who was his wife. It was not easy to wade through the fresh-ploughed clay, but Irene made her way slowly in the direction indicated. As she came closer, she could see that the dwelling-house was situated far within the copse, and almost completely concealed by the foliage. She did not intend to ask for food or rest gratis, for she had money to pay for both ; but she feared that her presence there, travelling alone, would excite unpleasant suspicions. The reader will naturally ask here, how could she have money ? A very natural question it is, but easily enough answered. While Irene was still aboard the ship which carried her from Alexandria—to almost a watery grave—she sewed up some of her jewels, and some small pieces of gold and silver coin in various parts of her clothing, and it turned out luckily enough for her that the robbers who took away her finger and ear rings, did not think of instituting a further search.

Before entering the copse a couple of little squalid children ran out to look at her, and when they had gratified their curiosity sufficiently, ran back to warn their parent of her coming. Approaching the door of the low, thatched, mud cabin, she was about to knock, when a sharp-faced woman with sunken fiery eyes made her appearance and inquired what she wanted there. Irene, who had by this time detached a coin from the end of her tunic, held it up and repeated the request she had made to the men. The sight of the coin softened the descendant, as she styled herself, of Cincinnatus by her father's side, and a frugal meal was quickly prepared. As Irene partook of it, she engaged her queer hostess in conversation, and among other things, asked her whether she had ever heard of the Christian religion. The woman replied that she had not, but that she had heard tell of some Jewish people who hated the gods and ate children. Irene could not help laughing at the

idea, though she checked herself instantly, and asked whether the Romans did not expose children to perish on the mountains. "O yes," she answered, "we all get rid of our deformed or sickly children in that way: What good are they?" Irene shuddered. "Ma," whispered one of the children, tugging at the parental skirt, "is she Ceres? She is *so* pretty." The children had been told stories about Pan and Ceres, and had heard that the goddess was beautiful. That was all the religious instruction they were ever likely destined to receive.

Irene remained at the cabin that night, sleeping on a straw-mat just outside the door; as within there was but one room for the use of the whole family. Next day she set out early for Capua, where she remained a few days and took a public conveyance to Rome. As she entered the city, and passed along the foot of the Aventine, in the direction of the Circus Maximus, she saw new buildings going up on all sides, and men employed here and there clearing away the rubbish of vast temples which appeared to have been burned. Broken arches, fragments of beautifully decorated entablatures, portions of walls, sundered, but still standing with their Corinthian pilasters; sections of columns, and shapeless masses of bronze which once were statues, charred beams and burnt rods of bracing iron, spoke more forcibly than words could do, the fearful conflagration, which served as an excuse for the brutal persecution under Nero.

This fire, which devoured with insatiable appetite temples in which were collected the trophies and spoils of centuries, gathered from every region where Roman arms had carried victory, the palaces of the rich with their countless treasures of art, and the homes of the poor, with their scant yet necessary appointments, took place in the tenth year of Nero's reign. Though Tacitus claims that it is uncertain whether the disaster was the result of accident or the crime of the Prince, Suetonius, Dio, and Sulpicius Severus assert distinctly that Nero was the incendiary. Starting at the circus among warehouses, which contained inflammable matter, it was borne along on the wings of a strong wind with incredible swiftness, through the narrow and crooked streets of the old city. Huge columns of dense black smoke ascended high heavenward, and rolled down again with the varying currents in the air,

sweeping the ground and blinding the struggling masses, who ran hither and thither frantically, through the streets. Those who fled at the first alarm found safety beyond the Tiber, or without the walls ; but of those who stayed to save their effects, to carry off the sick, to lead the aged, or the younger children to safer quarters, how many perished has never been known. Often it happened that a crowd of women and children running in one direction, driven by the heat and smoke, would rush against another crowd coming in the opposite direction, pursued likewise closely by the forked flames, for millions of sparks, which shot aloft like rockets from the burning dwellings, would whirl about in a giddy maze and descend afar off, carrying fresh destruction where they fell. Thus many furnaces raged with increasing fury, in different parts of the city, at once hemming in the terrified inhabitants, and rendering difficult, almost impossible, their escape. Some driven to madness by fright or pain, seized brands from the burning, and threw them into houses yet untouched by the flames ; others did so out of spite, or in order to prosecute with better success, their trade of plundering, while many in despair, cast themselves into their burning dwellings, and perished with their offspring, on the sacred family hearth. For six days the conflagration went on, levelling with the ground, as Tacitus narrates, three wards, or districts of the fourteen, into which Rome was divided ; leaving only four intact, and so injuring the other seven, that only a few dismantled and half-burned roofs remained.*

True, the tyrant provided for the houseless people tents and food at a cheap rate ; true, he gave prizes to those who would rebuild the finest residences on the ruins of their former palaces ; true, the new city with its wide streets, fountains, gardens, and, above all, Nero's own Golden Palace was a noble capital for an emperor and home for the gods ; but all this could not remove the stigma attaching to Nero's name as the author of the misery and suffering entailed by the awful calamity upon the citizens of Rome. Their hatred was still further intensified by a report, which went abroad, that while ruin was thus running riot among the people, the tyrant fiddled in

* Lib. XV. *Annals*.

his palace, or as Tacitus puts it, "organised private theatricals and sang the destruction of Troy, likening the present to that ancient scourge." To divert the suspicion, or rather certain punishment from himself, he gave out that the Christians were the authors of the crime, and published against them the blood-thirsty edicts which gave countless martyrs to the Church.

Irene wept as the sights about her suggested the memory of sufferings! endured by women and children as heroically as by men, for the name of Christ; but she little thought as she approached the city, that the road over which she travelled was mined by the catacombs in which the holy bodies of so many of these martyrs slept. Many a time after, she visited these underground graveyards, and always came away fired with an ardent desire for martyrdom. On one of these occasions, as she rose from her devotions, her attention was drawn to an old man, by a heavy sigh which seemed to proceed from him. There he stood, bent low by weight of years and sorrow, his hair snowy white, and sparse and long, swaying with the motion of his well-formed head. Behind the wrinkles which now furrowed his features, the keen eyes of Irene detected traces of a manly beauty long departed. The reddened eyelids, which in the dim light of the place seemed unnaturally deep, and of a purple hue, were moist with a single tear, which was big with the tale of throbbing visions that thronged his tired memory. There are moments in, perhaps, every human life, when sad reminiscences of the bitter past thus crowd all unbidden upon the soul, drop their poisoned vial into its gaping wounds, and hie away making room for others twice as sad. We strive to put them from us, and we fail; then we cling to them, yea, caress them, and grow loth, in spite of their oppression, to part with them, strange beings that we are, as if from the very excess of our suffering we may extract a healing balm. Just as children love to hear weird tales of ghosts and goblins, though they shudder at the recital!

Thus stood the aged man beside Irene, wrapt up in thought, unconscious or regardless of observers, and gazed on a tablet let into the wall and bearing no other inscription than the letters *Æ. X.*, whose symbolism hidden in part from us, was pregnant with a meaning for him that a world of books could not express.

At the moment when he was noticed by the young woman, the struggle which had been going on within him, between, on the one hand, the tenderness of a father's love, and on the other, the heroic faith-born self-sacrifice of the Christian, was drawing to a close. There are temptations that seem like the purest whispering of the Divinity; these are hardest to overcome, and oftenest fatal to the careless soul; and his was of them. Within that tomb, it required little fancy to depict the mangled remains of a beautiful maid, a child in years, an angel in perfection, his only daughter, butchered to glut a tyrant's hate. As he stood there motionless, he saw her once more as in childhood kneeling at his side, and he felt her soft palm upon his wrinkled forehead, her sweet breath upon his cheek. He saw his fond wife's image mirrored in the large and loving eyes, as he looked down into the upturned face; he heard the dulcet music of the voice, now hushed for ever, bidding him take courage in his grief; or uttering the half-sighed prayer for her father's safety: and then in his bosom the tempest of long pent feeling arose. It was not like the wild raging tumultuous fury of the youthful lover, robbed by some rival of his bride; but it was the deep, sullen, soul-splitting, lancinating ache of feeble age, which hounds on the sufferer to resist, though he cannot disarm the decree which blights his last and only hope. Why did he ever become a Christian? His son was torn from him first, then his wife, then his daughter—his darling child. "And what is left me now," he thought, "to live for; what remains for me to look at, but this cold, cold, marble stone, which marks the spot they rest in so calmly?" He was told by his friends that he would be cursed if he abandoned the gods his fathers worshipped, and alas! when his thoughts had led him thus far, and he seemed ready to regret his change, an angel of peace was sent from the throne of Him who saw his agony and pitied it; an angel—perhaps the spirit of his own sainted child—to dry his tears and dispel his doubts.

In an instant the storm that was raging within his soul subsided; the deep conviction of his faith came back to him, and in the bereavement he had suffered, he saw clearly not a curse from gods which had no life, but blessings from the God who lives. In the light that faith shed around him, he saw his dear ones aloft on golden thrones, beside the Redeemer who

came into His glory through the shame of the cross ; he saw their arms stretched out, inviting him to join them in the bliss that has no end, and which their saintly prayers made surer for their father. He even seemed to catch an echo of the Divine harmonies of their abode, as the vision flitted from his sight, and he knelt upon the tufa pavement, with a radiant smile on his features and laughter in his heart. He raised his arms aloft, as a babe that wishes to be lifted by its mother from the cradle. The wrinkles faded from his brow, the healthy glow of youthful manhood returned to his countenance. Then, with a voice soft and melodious as a child's, he exclaimed, as his eyes looked upward with infinite yearning, "Yes, O Savior, I come." A priest who had just reached the spot, stood still, and gazed on the touching spectacle. "This," said he to Irene, "is Varro the father of a family of martyrs. His wife and all her children suffered for the faith, in the first year of the persecution ; and he escaped with his life after having been scourged and torn with iron hooks. The executioners thought him dead, and left him to his friends ; but he survived, and for two years he has every day visited the tomb of his martyred children in this gallery." He then approached the aged confessor, who still maintained his attitude of prayer ; but a single glance convinced him that the soul had fled to a better world. He was dead, but the sweetness of his calm looks would almost persuade one that he still lived. The priest knelt beside the body of the Saint, and with Irene recited a few short prayers. His friends were notified of his death, and with all due ceremony they laid him beside his wife and children, to sleep till the trumpet shall sound for the resurrection.

On her way to and from the Catacombs, Irene was accustomed to pass by the gloomy structure called the Mamertine prison. Often a shudder went through her frame as she looked at the small apertures with deep embrasures, which served as windows to yield a few rays of light to the unfortunate victims within. Here it was that St. Peter was imprisoned previous to his crucifixion on the Janiculum. From the same dungeon St. Paul was led out to be decapitated beyond the walls of the city. After a pious visit to all places in the city rendered sacred by Christian suffering, Irene concluded to remain in

Rome, and give herself up to a life of good works among the Christian poor. In order to have more ample means to carry out this design, she applied to the courts for the recovery of the property in Corinth, which her father had owned. She was certain of his death, and as far as she knew her brother was also dead; for she deemed it impossible for him to escape from the general massacre which followed the destruction of Jerusalem. She placed her case in the hands of an eminent lawyer, who exerted himself earnestly in the prosecution of the suit. After many months of delay, and several postponements, the matter was brought before the Senate, where Irene was obliged to appear in person. Although this famous legislative body had sunk almost into insignificance in point of power, yet it retained all its ancient dignity and external majesty. As Irene stood before that assembly, modestly, but with perfect composure, she seemed to feel that she was there to be sentenced to death. She held these men, who had no manhood, in supreme contempt; yet she prayed for their conversion and forgiveness. It was by their weakness that Nero was enabled to carry on his persecution, and owing to their cowardice that men like him, and Galba, and Vitellius, and later on a host of others, whose imbecility was equalled only by their profligacy, were allowed to assume the Roman purple. Irene's presence was commanding, her beauty exceptional, and the assembled senators were at once smitten by her charms. It seemed by their conduct, indeed, that her case was already won, as they expressed their admiration for her, both by words and gestures. But when it appeared that she was a Christian, and that her father had forfeited his property by disobeying the decrees of Nero to worship the Immortal gods, their pleasant looks were changed to stern ones; and Irene was informed that she could recover her title only by giving up her connection with the "Jewish sect of Christians," as they learnedly designated the religion of Jesus Christ. There were among these men, however, a few who dissented from this judgment, but their voice was lost in the vote of the majority.

The decision was read to her by a scribe. A stroke of the pen and the property was hers—only would she comply with the conditions? She stood there like one of the numerous statues which all about looked down upon the assembled

Fathers. Some of them had been chiselled in the school of Praxiteles, in Corinth, her home. Their beauty appealed to her now, with a strange mute eloquence. The frescoes on the walls, the Graces, the Muses, beamed upon her blithely. They had been painted by the disciples of Apelles, a native of her mother's island home. She flushed; she trembled. Wealth smiles on her, and beckons to her to follow, back, back to her dear old homestead in sunny Peloponesus; back to the land that blazes with memories of sages and heroes, rings with the laughter of poesy and music; breathes with soul of undying, matchless Art. "Be wise, child," whispered a venerable silver-bearded man, who saw her hesitation. "You are young, a long life is before you; be wise, accept a fortune." It was hard to live in indigence, she who had been brought up in ease and luxury. The future was dark. "Poverty is a crime," whispered the conscript Father, uttering a truism, he thought. After all, she might deceive the Senators. They did not know her. Nobody knew her in Rome. She could deny her faith with her lips only—and still be faithful to her creed. "Such wealth will be a blessing from the gods," said the lawyer, who saw a large fee in perspective. It *would* be a blessing. She could make the best of uses of it—help the needy, the sick. Ah! Irene, your temptation is a dangerous one; it looks like a prompting of Heaven. "Yield, fair client," said the lawyer, encouragingly. "Burn the incense; the State asks no more, and will not again trouble you. Think of once more visiting your home." Irene was moved; tears glistened in her eyes. Her home—aye, her home.

It was hard to give up that; and she saw it with all its surroundings and its history. For it is the history of one's childhood, of one's associations, with a hut or a palace, that constitutes the home. She sees the house in which she was born—its rooms and furniture within, its architectural beauty without. The garden—the beds of Narcissus and Cyclamens, which her mother loved to tend; the olive tree at the left of the fountain, where the orioles built their nests, and the lilacs at the right, with whose flowers she used to wreath her brow. And the mossy doon sheltered by the locust trees from the midday heat, where her mother often sat with her and Cyprian, and told them the tales that children love to hear. O Heaven! It

was hard, hard not to revisit these scenes. Was ever mortal called on to give up so much? Such was Irene's temptation. It did not last so long as it has taken to describe it. Thought travels fast. It was a hurricane, a sudden, mad, surging attack that left its victim almost without power of resistance. Almost!

Her hesitation, however, was misunderstood by the Senators. They took it to mean certain apostasy. Irene hesitated then, not to consider whether or not she would commit sin, but because she was surprised by the mode of the attack, and had to reason against its subtle principles. She might have been deceived; many others have been by specious arguments; but the Divine light which she had asked for was near by to show her that even a mere outward denial of her faith would give irreparable scandal; and the Divine aid was at hand to give her the victory over those natural and feminine impulses which shook her very soul. She felt that the Saviour's command to break all earthly ties for His sake, was indeed to take up the cross and follow Him. But whither does He lead? The struggle was fierce while it lasted; all her natural affections were on the side of the tempter; but it was short, and she was victorious. She dried her tears and bade her lawyer answer for her. Then she quitted the place. He looked after her, and shook his head slowly a number of times. What she had said to him was this: "I will not sell my soul." "Stubborn woman," said he then, to the scribe. That is how it struck him.

Some days after this as Irene was passing by the Temple of Venus she was accosted by one of the senators in the most affable manner. He was a man of middle age, to judge by his looks, with features that bore a kind and honest expression. Without waiting for a return of his salutation he proceeded to inform Irene that his son Tullius had seen her at the forum, and was profoundly impressed with her beauty; "and," he continued, "he would feel honored to be allowed to call on you." The maid was not a little surprised by this wholly unexpected declaration. As, however, the senator was a respectable man, she could not doubt his sincerity in making this proposal on behalf of his son. She replied, therefore, as politely as possible, that she was "already engaged and could not con-

sistently receive attention from his son." But she favored him with her address, and accepted an invitation to dine with the senator in the near future.

Irene had made inquiries on her first arrival concerning the Christian places of meeting. She at once made herself known to the priests, who found for her a proper abode. A family connected with the Imperial house of Flavius, of which St. Clement, the third successor of St. Peter, was a member, admitted her to their society. They lived near the site where the Coliseum was shortly afterwards built by Vespasian, and about a quarter of a mile from the old Church of St. Clement. She soon became acquainted with a large number of believers, some of them employed in the Emperor's palace and others in the houses of senators; some very wealthy, some very needy. There were among them tradesmen, artists, sculptors and boatmen, sailors, bankers, philosophers, slaves,—in a word men of every rank and occupation. Yet all met under the same roof, and received the Holy Eucharist at the altar, like children of a common Father. Her faith received additional strength by this proof of the unity of belief and discipline in Greece, in Asia, and in Rome.

When she lost hope of recovering her property, she sold her jewellery and all unnecessary ornaments, so as to realize as much money as possible; for it was clear she must have some means of support. Although a considerable sum was obtained by the sale, she saw plainly that she had not enough to support her without some constant source of income. Her scheme of aiding the poor was, consequently, abandoned, and she confined her efforts in this direction to nursing the sick, as far as her duties as a teacher of the Greek language and literature to distinguished pupils would allow. Within a year, her reputation had spread throughout the city, and she became as widely renowned and esteemed for her learning among the pagans as she was revered among the Christians for her disinterestedness and unassuming piety. Many were the invitations she received to banquets, to musical, and literary entertainments, public and private, from the most distinguished families in Rome; but although she did not lead the life of a cloistered nun, she waived most of the honors sought to be conferred on her, and accepted those only which she could not refuse without embarrassing her friends or slighting her benefactors.

The suitors, who came forward to plead for recognition, were many, and in every case their offers received a polite but unequivocal refusal. She was a mystery to the Christians and pagans alike, for to none, except the priests, had she made known the harrowing history of her betrothal and bereavement.

When the news of the great coming event went abroad, and it was certain that a double Triumph would take place, Irene among the rest was inquisitive and anxious to see the pageant, and perhaps hopeful—who knows—that among the captives from Jerusalem, she might see some one she had known, if even it were but a slave. As the time drew near those about her noticed that she grew anxious, and when the name of Simon was once mentioned she became agitated, and blushed deeply. All these signs of some hidden knowledge were commented on by the female acquaintances of our heroine, with deep whisperings and much wise head-shaking, and in some instances even with suspicious hints that appearances often deceive and so on; but though Irene understood their perplexity, and even fully interpreted their conduct, she took no means whatever of removing their impressions. Her nervousness at last increased so much that her sleep was deranged, and at night terrifying screams were heard in her apartments. On these occasions she dreamed that she was again in the hands of the tyrant, who was about to murder her. On the night before the Triumph, she saw her Julius and Cyprian coming to meet her, near the prison door of the Mamertine, when Simon and his son set upon and killed them and then attacked her. Soon, however, her assailant was the Roman Emperor, who wished to take away her property; and finally the fantastic jugglery of sleep transformed the Emperor into a ferocious tiger, which sprang at her throat. Her shrieks brought several of the inmates of the house to her room, who found her sitting on her bedside awake, but trembling violently, as if the dream had been a reality. She answered her visitors that she was well enough to be left alone, and they took their departure with strange misgivings about the cause of the sudden change in their young friend's manner.

On the morrow, she set out early with some friends to choose a spot from which to obtain a good view of the display but

this was no easy matter, as immense crowds thronged every vacant space where the procession was likely to pass. Few people have patience to remain in one place the greater part of a day, awaiting the arrival of a public pageant ; they prefer going to the point of its departure, and in some cases following behind it. Not so our friends. They knew that a point at the end of the course would afford as good a view as any other, and besides, would be less crowded. They sauntered along therefore, leisurely, through back streets and lanes, thus avoiding excessive crushing, and took up a position near the statue where Irene was detected by Simon. Long were the hours she lingered there, and strange were the fancies which whisked through her mind as she awaited the approach of the triumphal cortege. At last it came in sight, and with it came an awful din, mixed sounds of musical instruments, of men's voices, mocking, swearing, wailing or cheering, and boys' voices, imitating in shrill treble, the deeper tones of the men. As it approached nearer, the crowd wedged closer and closer together, and only the drawn swords of the marshals who led the advanced guard, could keep the people from rushing into the centre of the street. It became, at length, a difficult thing to keep one's feet ; and in her efforts to do so, and to scan at the same time, the faces of the captives, Irene's nervousness forsook her. As she looked up into the scarred and downcast faces of the poor creatures who were made the butt of so much ridicule and contempt, her bosom heaved with pity and emotion, and the dread memories of all she passed through herself, while in the East, came back with awful freshness.

It was just as her excitement had reached its highest pitch that the terrible Simon saw and struck at her ; and as she shrank back and dropped helpless in the arms of those behind her, the face of Julius loomed up before her. She shrieked and swooned as if she had seen a spirit ; and as her companions with extreme difficulty, strove to keep her from being trampled on, the crowd edged instantaneously into the vacant place, and thus hid her from the gaze of her lover. It was, indeed, well for her that the crowd in her vicinity was so dense ; for had it not been so, she would have fallen to the ground and been trodden to death. As it was, she was simply borne along and back through the throng, until she reached an open

doorway. Here she recovered her senses very quickly, but the shock she received was enough to drive her insane. How like her dream too, was the whole proceeding!

She saw Julius, but she was firmly convinced that it was only his spirit, or that she had been the victim of an illusion. She therefore raised no temple of hope upon such a foundation, though it was as much beyond her power as it was contrary to her desires to tear his sweet image from her soul. So she sat in a kind of reverie, half unconscious of the presence of her companions, who remained with her, preferring to sacrifice their curiosity rather than leave her there alone. When at last the crowd began to melt away, and the fiery sun sank to rest behind the Esquiline, Irene had sufficiently recovered to set out for her home. Suddenly, an intense black cloud arose and spread with great rapidity over the whole city. A vivid flash lit up the streets for a moment, and then all was black again. The women linked arms and walked closely together and with rapid steps, for fear of becoming separated in the gloom. Another flash revealed a crowd ahead and coming towards them. They had passed the Forum and were rounding the foot of the Palatine, when the threatening storm burst over them; one of those violent tempests which visit Southern latitudes so frequently, coming on unexpectedly, and passing away in a few minutes. No doubtful mutterings of distant thunder prepares the traveller for the attack, but a deafening peal may surprise him, far from shelter, and the riven oak across his path may warn him how merciless is the thunder-bolt. Near where the arch of Titus now stands, large quantities of stone and sand with other building materials were piled up in immense heaps; and when the sudden gusts of wind struck these, it scattered the lighter substances in every direction, blinding the eyes, and even endangering life. It was just here that torrents of rain began to pour down upon the luckless females, who, unable to make headway against the combined wind and showers of sand and rain, sought the inviting colonnade of the palace of the Cæsars, till the sky would clear up. But the crowd whom they had seen ahead, was just upon them, a lot of half-drunken soldiers, returning after a carousal, to their camp. In an instant they seized the terrified girls, and forced them to walk back, or rather trot

along with them. They soon lost all trace one of the other ; and their screams were drowned by the howling of the storm and the bacchanal shouting of their captors. They had proceeded only a short distance, when the rain ceased, the wind subsided, and the twinkling stars appeared in the cloudless sky. When they had repassed the Forum, two men suddenly made their appearance. One was Servius, the villain who had deceived Irene about the death of Julius, the other was Joras the son of Simon, who had escaped from the hands of his jailer and was endeavoring to escape from the city. At the sight of an officer, the soldiers abandoned their prey and dispersed in every direction. Two of the women had already got away from them, and Irene alone remained to be released. Both Joras and Servius though unknown to each other, recognised the girl on the instant, and rushed towards her. "She is my wife," said Joras in Greek, and seized the terrified Irene. Servius did not understand his tongue, and immediately aimed a blow at him.

The girl, weakened by her previous rough treatment fell helpless between these two fierce men, who now began a deadly combat for her possession. The Roman had the advantage in arms, but though Joras had only a small poniard, his vast strength (almost equal to his father's), made him a match for the fierce Roman. The latter's arm was nerved by jealousy, and hatred of his rival Julius ; while the former fought with the rash desperation of the disappointed lover. In a moment he had forgotten his desire to escape, but even if he had time to deliberate, he would sacrifice a hundred lives in order to secure Irene. As these two men confronted each other, their faces ashy, their teeth set, and their eyes glaring like those of a savage beast, their passions rising with each successive blow or parry, and their thrusts growing momentarily more and more rapid and deadly, while the innocent object of their bloody strife lay swooning at their feet, the pale stars silently watching the issue of their combat, and the clash of the murderous steel, the only sound that answered the hooting of an owl in a niche of the adjacent Forum, they formed a picture such as few have seen, and none who did have e'er forgotten.

Many were the wounds both received, and blood flowed profusely upon the street, making their footing doubly inse-

cure, on a pavement already slippery after the recent rain. The terrible mental strain they were enduring, as well as their extraordinary physical exertion, soon produced their effects, and the heavy breathing showed that the end was very near. By a dexterous parry, Joras averted a well-aimed blow of his adversary, who rushed beyond him, carried forward by the combined weight of his body and the force of the stroke. In an instant the latter had wheeled around and stood prepared for the attack of the Jew, who struck downwards with his short weapon at him, with the full strength of his gigantic body. The Roman's defence was vain, and he fell crushed by the superior weight of his adversary. The keen blade, however, was an inch wide of its aim, and was broken on his breastplate. At this moment Irene recovered consciousness, and saw both men on the ground, but she was too dazed to think of fleeing. Servius stunned for an instant, now struggled to get from under his enemy, who lay motionless across him. The force of his blow had caused him to lose his footing, and he was thrown with his forehead upon the hard pavement. The victory was now in the Roman's hands; and as he placed his foot upon the body of Joras, to pierce his throat with his sword, a body of horsemen rode up to the spot.



CHAPTER XVII.

WAS IT IRENE ?

"Intolerabilius nihil est quam femina dives."—JUV.

"Of all life's various curses, few so great
As woman's daring backed by real estate."—*Badham's Translation.*

IN Rome, about midway between the Ælian bridge (now called the Ponte St. Angelo), and the new Suspension Bridge near the Church of St. Giovanni dei Fiorentini, the traveller can see, at low water, a part of the ruins of the Pons Triumphalis, a work which was new in the lifetime of the persons with whom our story deals. On a lovely May morning, when the sun was already high in the heavens, crowds might be seen wending their way across this convenient highway, towards the Vatican Mount, evidently bent on witnessing the gladiatorial combats and other sports in the Circus of Caligula. In the reign of Nero many heroic Christians were exposed to the lions in this theater, and rendered the soil of its arena as sacred by the profusion of their blood, as that of the famous Coliseum became some years later, for a similar reason. Though not so vast as the Coliseum nor so beautiful in an architectural sense, this great work, finished by Nero, was still very large. Its walls were lofty, and the seats for the accommodation of the people were arranged in tiers, one above the other, so as to afford a good view to those farthest removed from the ring.

The sports were this day on an extensive scale, as a multitude of men from among the captive soldiers of Simon were found able, and even anxious, to fight for prizes, or even amusement. Some fought with spears only, others with swords only, while one species of combat seemed to be particularly attractive,

wherein the parties were armed with a dagger and a net fastened on the end of a pole. After the gladiators came the beast-fighters, who were placed in the ring unarmed, or having but a small knife, with which to defend themselves against a wild bear, a panther or a lion.

Among the gladiators were the two Jews who had been taken prisoners by Julius, Gad, the big clumsy giant and Ben, the supple dwarf; but as soon as they appeared, the whole assembly burst out into boisterous laughter. They would no doubt enjoy the murder of one or both captives; but even the hard-hearted Roman mob deemed such a contest unequal and unfair. So they shouted, "Give the big one to a panther." "Yes, to the panther," reverberated the cry from a score thousand throats. When the clamor had subsided, and the master of the games was explaining that these two were to fight to settle a wager made in Jerusalem, some one with a shrill tremulous voice, which reached every corner of the theater, yelled, "Give the little fellow to a mouse." It was useless to endeavor to stem the torrent of hilarity which greeted this sally. Men jumped upon the benches and cheered, and threw up their hats, women screamed with delight, and beat their fans together, and boys whistled and blew on shrill pipes to the infinite annoyance and chagrin of the master of the entertainments, who was obliged, in obedience to the popular wish to change his programme and recast the sport. The large man was shortly after placed in the arena with a lion. This time he was greeted with the usual cheer, with which the people were wont to encourage the victims of this brutal amusement. The Jew was armed with a short sword, his only weapon of defence against the hungry brute which was to make of him his food. As soon as the lion was let loose, it sprang cat-like into the ring, ran about roaring and lashing the railing with its long brush-tipped tail. The moment it caught sight of its victim, it stopped short, ceased roaring, and then settling down into a half-sitting posture began slowly approaching him. When within five or six feet of him, it gathered itself for the spring; and after placing its enormous fore and hind paws close together, eyeing him cautiously the while, and partially opening and shutting its jaws with a rapid convulsive movement, it pounced upon and seized him by the left shoulder. He was thrown back-

wards by the shock, but was quick enough in his defence to plunge his blade into the body of the lion just behind the left fore leg. Both fell together and rolled over two or three times, to the morbid delight of the almost frenzied spectators. Then the lion gave up its hold on the man's shoulder and seized him by the throat. Again the blade entered its body and broke off close at the hilt. It was the aimless blow of a desperate and dying man; but it caused the beast to relax its hold. With a terrific and prolonged howl, it bit at the broken sword in its side, and then fell exhausted beside its bleeding victim. A bell was sounded, and the scavengers came upon the scene to remove the corpses.

Julius was present near the raised platform on which Titus and some members of the Imperial family sat. He was there in obedience to duty; but it was easy to see that his heart was elsewhere. His swollen and blood-shot eyes, strong evidence of a sleepless night, might lead those unaware of the real cause to remark that he had given himself up to a life of dissipation. His first impulse upon hearing of the presumptive fate of Irene was to drown his grief in the wine cup; even suicide seemed to have a charm for him. He had learned from the writings of the Stoics that it was a courageous act to take one's own life. But his reason repelled this unnatural doctrine, and the few ideas of Christian morality which he had picked up in his conversations with Irene, caused him to regard self-murder as an act of cowardice, a shrinking from the ills of one's unlucky fate.* As he passed over the Triumphal Bridge that morning at the head of the guards, he looked down into the muddy and quick-running river. It had a strange fascination for him, and the temptation to rush over into its waters was great; but the thought of Irene, whose *shade*, he said, would reprove him, kept him back. So, averting his eyes, he pushed on, and looked fixedly at the opposite shore, lest the temptation should, by another glance, return to harass him. During the games he stood in one position, and hardly ever raised his eyes to see what was going on, even when the uproar was at its loudest.

Just as the carcase of the dead lion was taken from the arena, a little boy dressed like a page, and wearing a livery he well knew, but failed, at the moment, to recognise, handed

him a scented note without a seal. The absence of the seal showed that the note was written on the grounds. Mechanically Julius opened it and read its contents. A blush mounted to his cheeks, as he proceeded, and when he had finished reading, he looked up in the direction indicated in the note. It read:—"Dearest Julius,—It makes me happy to let my eyes rest once more on your long-absent countenance. Look towards the north, tenth bench from the arena, first division. Come and dine with me to-night. Yours ever, Pontia." "My mistress must have an answer," said the page, as Julius kept looking towards the north side of the circus. "Yes, yes," said Julius carelessly; and at the same moment he caught the eyes of the lady who was seated on the tenth bench, first division. She felt that he had seen her, and she waved her handkerchief as a salute. Perplexed, he returned the salute, and turning about, he saw the boy already on his way back to report an affirmative answer to Pontia. But Julius did not mean to accept the invitation, at least not on that day; and he was now at a loss how to account for his conduct. The boy took the words "Yes, yes," which Julius had uttered without attaching any distinct meaning to them, as an answer for his mistress, and would, doubtless, deliver it accurately to her. There was no escape, therefore, and philosopher that he was, he suppressed his displeasure, and made up his mind to dine that evening with the wealthy Pontia. Promptly at eight o'clock, the usual hour for dinner at her mansion (as Julius knew from his former acquaintance), though, in her haste, Pontia forgot to mention the hour in the note, Julius might be seen near the gardens of Lucullus, approaching a large mansion built entirely of Aventine, and finished with the rich and showy ornamentation peculiar to the Corinthian order of architecture. The rich lace curtains of Syrian manufacture were drawn back from the windows on the ground floor, thus giving a good view of the gilded cornices and frescoed walls, and of the ebony furniture within, on whose polished surfaces the lights from a dozen gilded candelabra depending from the ceiling were reflected and multiplied indefinitely. Marble steps led to the vestibule, within which on either hand were placed large bronze urns, smiling with deliciously flavored flowers and creeping vines, and here were stationed the slaves who conducted the guests to the hall within.

As Julius passed the threshold the sweet sounds of a lute filled his ears with harmony, while the fragrant odors of fresh flowers, and scented cassolettes greeted his senses with a grateful salutation. Advancing into the atrium, the lute ceased to sound, and after a moment's pause the lady Pontia advanced to meet the young soldier. Her greeting was seemingly hearty; but as Julius bowed and kissed her extended hand, she felt that his movements were constrained, and that their relations were not, at least on his part, what they had formerly been. Nevertheless a feigned warmth, which was not felt, established itself at once between them, as they walked arm in arm, back and forth, past the spouting fountain, and discussed the news of the day in the city.

Pontia was one of the rich women of Rome. Her father was a senator, who had accumulated vast wealth, and dying without male issue, had left it all to his two daughters. Fame had it, Pontia had got rid of her sister. Some said she had poisoned her, others, that she had her strangled; but money diverted the suspicions of any too zealous official, while fear of a powerful woman's anger kept lesser people silent. Julius had been introduced to this woman a year before his departure for the East under Vespasian, and during that time he had visited her in company with other officers; but rarely alone, although he plainly perceived her preferences were for himself. Julius shrank inwardly from her, whose reputation was tarnished with the suspicion of crime; and it was only the fashion of the day, and the fact that she was not thought less of in society, that obliged him to accept her invitations. He was glad, therefore, when the order came to depart for Asia for he felt that she was striving to weave a web about him, which he found it difficult to avoid.

Pontia was dressed for the evening in such costly apparel as to rival the Empress herself, and although she was to some extent "made up," she had no need of using "Poppæan oils" or other cosmetics to beautify her complexion which was particularly fair, and not yet touched by age. Julius felt that she wished to commence her Circean work once more; and at this time, of all others, he was least prepared to give it any countenance. Although he had blundered into this visit he would retreat as speedily as possible. "I am not much in the habit

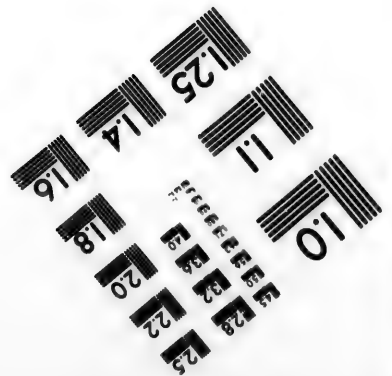
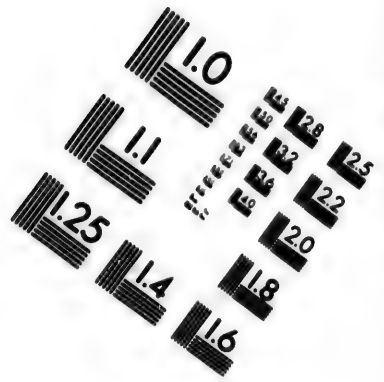
of visiting now " said he at last, when an opportunity offered. "Society and I have become strangers, and my books are my only companions. In fact," he continued, "I am like a fish out of water in ladies' society so little have I seen of it these three years." "But surely," said Pontia, chidingly, "you cannot long remain so. Of course," she added, with a sigh, and then dropped her voice to a sympathetic depth and looked at the floor, "your loss is an exceptionally great one. . Start not, dearest Julius, I alone perhaps in all Rome know that you loved Irene." Here she laid her head on his shoulder and shed a tear of deep deceit. "Oh what an end!" and Pontia sobbed aloud. "Oh Pontia," said the soldier, whose whole being was burning with fever heat at the discovery of the extent of her knowledge, "do not weep, my spirit is broken and my heart, too; but you are too good, too sympathetic to thus suffer on account of my afflictions." In a moment his opinion of Pontia had changed. He began to doubt whether she was really so wicked as report had made her, and still his knowledge of human nature kept him on his guard. Then he was not sure how much of his intrigue she knew of; but he resolved to be candid and to try to learn what she really knew of Irene. "The past," said he, "is gone, and our duty is to forget it,"—"and seek a happier future," added Pontia, smiling through her tears. Julius was silent. He might have embraced her at that moment and called her his own. He knew this, and he felt that she would be his willing captive, but he was true to his manhood and the sweet memory of his Irene.

She saw in a moment that she had not won him yet; so with exquisite tact she resumed the subject which she believed would bring her nearest to him. "I loved Irene," she began, "the moment I saw her, so beautiful, so fair, so learned, so pious. If all those Jews were like her I should myself become a Christian." This eulogy on his beloved caused Julius to believe that Pontia was, at least, a stranger to jealousy. "A strange sect those Christians," he replied; and before he could say more a bell announced that dinner was served. Julius was the only guest, consequently the same subject of conversation was pursued throughout the meal. Julius was almost ascetic in his abstemiousness, but he made a show of eating something, while he ministered with his former adroitness to the wants of his

fair hostess. As the meal went on he heard such scraps of Irene's history as had come before the public. Pontia had often met her in social circles, and had even taken some lessons from her in music; but it was only on the day before that she had learned of her relations to Julius. It happened in this way. There was a common report in the army that Julius was the accepted suitor of the notorious Pontia. This report was so widely believed that the visits of Julius to Irene, when she and her father were in the Roman camp, were looked upon as flirtations, and he was accordingly threatened with her just ire by his comrades as often as they felt in jesting humor. As soon as the army had arrived at Rome from the East, Servius who, knew nothing of Irene's presence in the city, made inquiries about Pontia, and having learned where she lived, called on her and made known, in the most exaggerated manner possible, Julius' relations with the Christian beauty. Hereby a double purpose was served. Servius had intended to injure Julius by diverting from him the love of a rich and powerful woman, but he only inflamed it the more. On the other hand, Pontia, who identified the Irene of her acquaintance with the one described by Servius, resolved to injure her, and if possible get rid of a formidable rival. In the jealousy of Pontia then, Servius found a means of getting possession of Irene, and through his envy towards Julius, Pontia found in him a ready tool to destroy her. She gave Servius, to this end, a considerable sum of money to carry off Irene, and bring her, dead or alive, into her power, and the plot was to be carried out on the very night of the Triumph. Could Julius have but known, while he supped with the infamous Pontia, that his beloved was under the same roof as himself, a victim of her fiendish jealousy, who can say what his injured soul would have prompted him to do? Almost certain is it that he would have taken the life of the murderess of his betrothed. But he was ignorant of the plot and he parted with Pontia that night with a sense of gratitude, and almost ashamed that he should have ever suspected her virtue. He had learned nothing important of the life of Irene, though the mention of her name gave him some consolation; and of her death—well, what he heard was only a repetition of what Servius had already reported: that Joras had murdered her before his recapture, and that her body was carried away by some women who said they were her friends.

Servius alone knew that the Jew's victim was Irene; "and without suspecting that I knew her too," said Pontia, "he related the story of her death. I cautioned him to reveal her fate to no one else lest you should be more deeply wounded."

It was almost midnight of the day of the great Triumph when Servius returned to the camp. He was haggard-looking and bleeding; his clothes were torn, and his armor soiled and battered. He went to his quarters immediately, and sent a messenger to Julius, whom he prayed to come and see him quickly. The messenger found Julius reading Plato, whose doctrine on the immortality of the soul began to have a real charm for him. He was resolved to make every possible inquiry for his betrothed, whom he had caught sight of that morning, in order to discover her abode or to gain some information concerning her. As he had no special love for this fellow, Servius, who had of late been promoted for bravery, and as he had good reason to surmise that Servius reciprocated the ill feeling, he could not at all divine the reason of the summons. He hesitated for a while, then locked up his book, and putting on his cloak and cap, he issued forth unarmed. As he went along towards the tent of the officer, his curiosity gave way to a persistent foreboding of ill which increased by degrees to positive alarm. Involuntarily he quickened his pace until near the canvas dwelling, when becoming aware of his agitation, he paused to allow it to subside. At length he entered and saluted, somewhat formally, the occupant, who was expecting the coming of a physician to dress his wounds. Seeing that the man was in pain Julius relaxed his rigid manner, and asked the recumbent sufferer how he had received his wounds, at the same time, offering to place a bolster under his head. Far from exciting in him generous thoughts, the kind offer of Julius only deepened this man's hatred; he declined to be assisted, and motioned to his curious visitor to be seated. There were only a pile of blankets and a provision sack in the camp, to afford sitting room, so with that deference which good manners make one show to the sick, Julius sat down on the blankets, and asked mildly why he had been sent for. "I am sorely wounded," replied Servius, "and I fear I may not live long; and you are interested in my fate." This was mysterious language, but Julius silently waited for further developments. "Joras,



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you know, escaped from his guards," Servius went on to say, "and I met him alone, and fought him single-handed." "Indeed," said Julius, rather enviously. "The guards came up just as he fell stunned," continued Servius, "and took him off to the Mamertine." He hesitated; he wished to sharpen his arrow well. "It was for your sake I attacked him," said he, as carelessly as he could. "For my sake," echoed Julius, whose brow lowered. "The man is insane," he thought. "He had a partner who seemed not to be an unwilling one," Servius continued in the same tone. "I knew that if you had been in my place you would have killed him; therefore, I attacked him." Julius sprang to his feet. "What do you mean?" he gasped; "speak man; explain your enigmas—who?" "When he saw that he was attacked he stabbed her to the heart, and we fought over her corpse." "It was"—"Irene," replied the other, in a sepulchral tone. "Liar, villain," screamed Julius, as he grasped for the sword which he had fortunately left behind him. "You have your revenge; I could kill you; but dog, you are too unworthy of an honest man's steel. Yet, yet," he continued, as he strode within the narrow limits of the canvas, and clasped his head with both hands, "I saw her to-day and it may be true; but bird of evil omen," he went on, turning fiercely towards the prostrate Servius, "you have belied the purest of women and, if you ever rise from that pallet you shall answer the calumny with naked steel. Oh, Irene, Irene," he cried, "I shall yet meet you; it is not true, it cannot be." As he said this, Servius, for whose wounds the agonies of Julius were like a soothing balm, stretched out his hand and said with perfect coolness, "Here." Julius turned and beheld the extended hand. It contained a locket which he at once recognized, a gift to his betrothed, containing a miniature portrait of himself and of her. He seized it and pressed it to his lips, then to his breast, and stood in silent sorrow dwelling upon the past. His grief had assumed the character which most afflicts and wears the soul, a tearless, wordless crucifixion. The surgeon came at last and interrupted his gloomy meditation, and as he turned to leave, Servius hurled after him this last poisoned shaft: "Some women who said they knew Irene, took away her body." Julius heard the words, but for a long time did not seem to comprehend them. When he did he knew that the last chance

of ever seeing her, alive or dead, was lost. All was lost, his heaven was lost, and he had no ambition now in life. His heaven was his re-union some day with Irene.

As the unfortunate man went aimlessly along, he found the air hot and oppressive, though it was really chilly ; and his brain seemed to be bursting through his skull : and he wished and longed for water, water to bathe his burning temples, water to plunge into, water to drown in and follow his beloved to the land of shades and darkness. To the guard who demanded the password he answered mechanically ; but the challenge had the effect of causing him to see that he was going away from, instead of towards his tent. He changed his direction thereupon and soon came to it, but he could not enter. He remained at the entrance, his soul wrapped in the deepest gloom of melancholy, and with but one confused idea in his mind, to avenge a wrong he had suffered ; but how, or on whom he did not, could not, know. Then he swore in the bitterness of his soul, and shook his fist at the few stars that blinked innocently above him ; and finally, throwing himself on the ground, he lay there for hours in a state bordering on delirium, and rose up only when the rising sun shed its first-born beams into his swollen and grimy countenance.

Quickly he set off for the Mamertine, in order, if possible, to be the executioner of his beloved Irene's assassin ; but he was late ; Joras was already numbered among the dead. Is it any wonder he would look haggard and dissipated, as he stood on duty at the Circus ? or is it to be wondered at that he should act so like a maniac, when his belief in immortality was not yet secure ?

A week after this date, Julius received a sealed letter from a young slave, and as he was breaking the seal, he was notified that the Emperor wished to see him forthwith. The half-opened letter was thrust into his pouch unread, and with the alacrity characteristic of Roman discipline, he hurried on to the Caesar's palace, to receive his orders.



CHAPTER XVIII.

ALMOST A MURDER.

"Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,
That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way."

—*The Corsair*.—Canto 1.

A FEW days of pleasant sailing and moderate play of the oars, brought the vessel in which Cyprian had set sail in view of a picturesque land, through which a double chain of mountains, clad with impenetrable forest, ran in almost parallel lines. Far in the interior stood a lone sentinel almost eight thousand feet high, a giant among its fellows, whose snow-capped summit shone with dazzling splendor in the rays of a tropical sun. This was Mount Ida, on which, according to the Greek mythology, gods had been bred, and gods had held their courts.

The land he was approaching was Crete, whose quondam king Idomeneus, was sung by the ancient bard, who pictured Ilium's fall. As the Hyads at this date arose with the sun, the sailors resolved to go no further till the rainy season would pass; so, sailing along the fertile northern shore of the island, they made for the port of Cydonia. Anchoring here, they entered the city, and spent their time as sailors, the world over, have ever done, and will continue to do till the seas dry up and cancel their engagements. A few times only Cyprian left the ship, and when he did so, he found that there were people on this lovely island who worshipped the name of Christ. "No," said a fisherman to him, in answer to a question: "we are not such fools as to believe in gods who were formerly men. The priests taught our fathers so much that was false and foolish, that they at length gave up all faith in gods. Even

common people like ourselves, who cannot read, try to get others who can, to read to them the godless books of Lucian. We now believe in Jesus Christ, who was preached to us by the disciples of his Apostles, and our numbers are spreading." "Did the persecutions fall heavily on you here?" Cyprian asked. "No," replied the fisherman; "the Emperor did not heed us poor fishers; but in the city there were some so happy as to lay down their lives for the Gospel."

Although the frequent rain obscured the view, and rendered navigation a trifle dangerous, the wind did not rise, but remained favorable, and the master of the ship decided to set out without losing any more time. While they pushed out from the shore in a small boat, one of the men whose legs were hanging out over the gunwale and touching the water, was bitten by some kind of a fish that tried to carry him off bodily. The pain was so great as to cause him to swoon away, and in this condition he was brought aboard the ship. Soon the bitten limb swelled to an alarming size, and the inflammation extended into the body. The loss of this man might have been a calamity, for by some accident on shore the crew was already short. The master promised the god of the sea, Neptune, a great sacrifice, for the restoration of the young sailor. But his prayers were of no use, and Cyprian, seeing an occasion to preach the Gospel, laid his hand upon the sufferer, and healed him in the name of the Redeemer. The superstitious seamen looked upon him, therefore, as a god and wished to adore him then and there, but Cyprian correcting them, explained the doctrines of Christ, and exhorted them to believe in Him who could heal the sick and raise the dead to life by His infinite power. The master was at once converted, and most of the others consented to be baptized. In due course they arrived in Alexandria, and Cyprian presented himself to the Bishop of that city, the successor of St. Mark. He told him that he had found the Faith in Crete, and related what had occurred on the vessel. The holy man rejoiced, and having introduced the young priest to his fellow-laborers in the Lord's vineyard, directed them to show him the part of the city in which he might work henceforth. "Tell us about the Evangelist," said one, a deacon, anxious to hear something new of the beloved disciple. Cyprian entertained them for a long time, relating incidents

and anecdotes of the Apostle's life and labors, of his tender care of the blessed mother of the Lord, and of his wonderful influence over all who came in his way. "Strange," said another, "that he should outlive all his fellow-apostles, even the chief himself, St. Peter." "Yes," said Cyprian in reply, "and he often expressed his holy jealousy of this Apostle who was so highly favored as to die as the Lord did, nailed to a cross. But," he would say, "I too shall suffer for the Lord, though I do not deserve such an honor. As Rome saw the blood of Peter and of Paul flow, so it shall witness my poor confession." "Another persecution will come upon us then," said another priest, whose face and hands bore numerous scars, and whose fingers were all absent, having been cut off during the first great persecution. "Yes," said several in chorus, "the Evangelist is also a prophet." "Let us pray that we may be able to bear it," said the priest who had the marks of his past suffering. "Amen," cried all. "May our Lord keep our flocks from apostacy," they piously added. Cyprian found among the converts to Christianity, persons of almost every trade and occupation. At the *Agapæ* or feasts where the Holy Eucharist was dispensed, he met men of letters who had read and studied all the philosophic opinions extant. Side by side, with these learned men were slaves white and black, most of whom did not know how to read, nor how to write. It was in one word here just as in Greece and in Asia Minor; the vocation of Christians was given to the lowly and the mighty alike; and at God's altar all were brothers and sisters—none were slaves or masters. At its very outset, the religion of Jesus attacked two evils, which, at that epoch, were at the bottom of many others. The pagan world had reduced the slave to a condition little above the brutes; and woman to a moral depth little above the slave. Absolute power of life and death was in the hands of the slaveholder, who looked upon his slaves as his property, disposable at his will. He had paid for his slave, as he had paid for his cow or his goat; and who would dare to restrict his power over the former? The slaves were men, and had reason. So much the better; he could command their intelligent work; but if his horses could reason he would prefer *them* by all means; they were so much stronger than the *human* slave. Rarely it struck a pagan that humanity was a virtue to be

practised toward a slave ; and when he manumitted one, that is, freed him, it was generally on account of some great service rendered by him. It was to be expected, under such a condition of things, that slaves would so fall in self-respect, as to believe themselves inferior to freemen, no matter how deficient the latter might be in mental or corporal faculties. Want of education cramped their intellect, and the constant repetition in theory and practice of the doctrine, that the slave was a chattel, came to be regarded by them as a sort of Divine revelation, which they dared not so much as question. Although the Gospel preached by the Apostles did not tend directly to strangle the monster, it had indirectly this very effect. To tell the slave at that time, "You are your master's equal," would have quite disrupted society. True, the Church would have gained rapidly in numbers ; for every slave in the world would, perhaps, enlist under its banners. But war would be the result, a merciless war between intelligence and wealth on the weaker side, at least as regards numbers, and millions of ignorant and brutalized men on the other. After a war of this kind, these illiterate slaves would turn upon and slaughter each other, and the stronger would reduce the others to slavery ; and thus the evil, far from being rooted out, would be intensified. The method followed by the Church was both just and prudent, and indirectly produced the much desired result. She taught the slave, who came to her, to respect his master as his employer, who fed and provided for him, and, consequently, could justly claim at least a portion of his labor. If he claimed more, it would be better to bear the burden, than to engage in a struggle that would be either hopeless or ruinous, to shake off the yoke. Besides, she taught him that whatever unjust treatment he would receive at the hands of the ungodly in this life, would be avenged sooner or later ; that his patience would purchase in the next life a treasure for the sufferer. Thus she put the most effectual checks on premature rebellion ; and, even from a purely rational point of view, gave the slave a means of extracting comfort from his very afflictions. Of course she told him that he was his master's equal before God, and, therefore, not obliged to obey him in things unlawful. The contention of Gibbon, that the doctrine of *equality* brought many slaves into the ranks of the first Christians is,

therefore, without foundation ; for far from elating the slave, the Church taught him humility and obedience, in fact, exacted these ; and as far as this world was concerned, left him just where he was before. It was chiefly, however, by the effect of the Gospel teaching on the slave-holders that emancipation came about. These were taught to regard their slaves as human beings who had the same Heavenly Father as themselves, and the same Redeemer, Jesus Christ. The Gospel made the slave-holder, therefore, look upon his slaves as his brethren in Christ, who, by stress of circumstances, were placed in a position socially lower than that in which he himself moved. To treat his slaves humanely was not a recommendation simply ; it was a duty.

At the very dawn of his conversion the neophyte was instructed in the Divine precept of loving all men as himself, the slave and the freeman alike ; but as the deep meaning of this precept needs time and reflection to be fully grasped, it is easy to perceive that the slave-holding convert would begin to fulfil it, by treating his slaves kindly ; and as his practice of Christianity progressed towards perfection, he might end by manumitting all, or a number of them. It may be very safe to affirm, that other things being equal, for one slave who would be attracted to the Church by the doctrine of the equality of all men, ten slave-holders would be repelled from it by a dogma so opposed to their pride, their education and all their social habits. By degrees, however, the Gospel overcame the proud spirit which kept so many men below their native dignity ; and when society began to reorganize after the fall of the Western Empire of the Romans, slavery was unknown among peoples whom Christianity moulded into a higher civilization. Cyprian often spoke to crowds of people in the markets and public parks. He made many converts among the students of philosophy, and men of letters, who would never have so much as listened to the preaching of the Gospel had not the polished eloquence of the speaker attracted their attention. Once, as he was surrounded by a large number of these educated men, a pagan priest, who happened to be passing, pushed his way through the crowd and confronted the speaker. Cyprian went on quietly with his discourse on the unity of the Godhead ; and having completed his argument he drew the attention of the

audience to the fact that there were priests in every land, and among every known people. "This," he said, "is a proof that the religious sentiment is not merely a result of instruction, which may be forgotten and lost sight of again; but a principle planted in every man's soul by the Deity, which, though capable of defacement and distortion, never can die out entirely. Men's fears, you may say, keep the sentiment alive; but whence are those fears? Priests could not have conjured them into existence; they existed before priests, and were the parent of a priesthood. It is then evident, that a belief in Divinity of some kind was universal. But," he continued, "the numerous gods worshipped by different peoples are manifestly corruptions of the original idea of one God. Their differences prove them unreal and counterfeit; but they are so only because a real and genuine God exists, whom they have variously and in most cases ludicrously travestied. The fact, then, that various priesthoods and worships are in vogue, far from disproving,—furnish us with an additional proof of the existence of God. No more could two Gods exist than that one God could be, and not be at the same time, as you already understand, and are quite prepared to believe." The pagan priest who had been thus far carried away by the arguments of the young Christian, now returned to his plan of attack: but afraid to face the Christian priest in manful argument, he first had recourse to prejudice.

"Men of Alexandria," he began, "you are the sons of generations without number, who have worshipped the gods of our country. The sect whose God this man would have us adore, is hostile to us, and to the whole world. The Israelites stole our fathers' property and migrated into Palestine, encouraged by their God; and now they come back to mock us and to destroy the gods who made of us the most civilized people on earth. This man calls his sect Christian, because he believes that a certain Christ, who was put to death for robbery is God. How absurd! But this Christ was a Jew, and all who follow his doctrine are Jews." Here the mischievous eloquence of the priest worked up his own anger to fever heat, and he gesticulated wildly with his arms, and raised himself on his toes in his mad desire to vanquish his foe. But the audience was an enlightened one, and not easily led away with

chaff. He saw this ; and with the quick perception begotten of cunning, he left off his wrathful harangue, and addressed the Christian priest in this manner : " Well ! *Priest* of the only true God, why did not your God stand by your great city and protect it against its enemies. Jerusalem, the city of your people, is in ruins ; how do you intend to gain followers, now that the world sees your God's great weakness ? " " Fellow men," replied Cyprian, " you are versed in history, and you know that the migration this priest has alluded to, was but the lawful throwing off by the Jews of a life of bondage. You have read the authentic history of Moses, and are, I am sure, convinced that these people deserved some compensation from their cruel task-masters." A nod of assent from the majority of the students assured Cyprian of the influence he was winning ; and he was about to proceed, when the pagan priest interrupted him. " Your Moses learned all he knew from us," said he, contemptuously, " he would have perished in the sedges, or would have been a brickmaker like his brethren, if he had not been cared for by the too humane daughter of Pharaoh." " True," replied Cyprian, " therefore the safer is his testimony ; he learned all your sciences, and he put them to a good use, surely, when, without any gain to himself, he rescued his enslaved brethren from masters cruel enough to have demanded his death when a helpless infant. You have no historian, among you so ancient, and certainly none so trustworthy as Moses, whose record of events from the earliest times you must consult when you desire to learn anything of the early history of mankind. Yes, Moses owes Egypt his vast knowledge, but the whole world owes Moses a tribute of gratitude and praise for having rescued from oblivion the remote history of the human race." " But this does not answer my question," retorted the baffled priest of Serapis. " Why did not your God, who did so many wondrous things ages ago, save your Holy City from the gods of Rome ? Has He grown weaker of late ? " The crowd laughed at this sally, but their laughter was quickly turned upon the pagan by Cyprian's reply. Said he, " O priest of Serapis (a god unknown to your fathers), why did not your gods save Egypt from the arms of mighty Rome ? " A cheer greeted the *argumentum ad hominem*. Angry and desperate, the priest of Serapis returned to the charge. " All the gods have a home in

Rome," said he, striving to keep his temper, "and"—here his eye kindled as he felt he was about to score a successful parry—"it is like a Jew to strive to stir up the people of this happy province against the imperial house of the gods. You have murdered the helpless," he continued. "You excited all Asia to sedition. You burned the greater part of Rome, but the gods have triumphed over you and your dead God." The students became sullen and awaited the answer to these charges. It came slowly, calmly, and with the majestic tone of truth. "You have accused the Christians of sedition, of burning, and of murder," said Cyprian, looking the boastful pagan full in the face, "but it would be hard for you to prove such a monstrous assertion. Like many others you confound us Christians with the Jews, which is as absurd as to class the Stoics with the Epicureans, or the worshippers of Isis and Serapis with those of Ormuz and Ahriman. True, the Emperor Nero accused the Christians of burning Rome, but every one in Rome disbelieved him, and to-day it is taught in every school of history that he was himself the wicked incendiary. But you accuse us of sedition and of murdering the helpless. Here your ignorance, if you are really ignorant, misleads you. We are not Jews; and they were Jews who committed those outrages. They were, perhaps, driven to do some of them, but that matters little for our argument. Before the siege of Jerusalem began, the Christians went out of that city, and dwelt at Pella. They were often attacked by the Jews, but they never retaliated. What means then your question, 'Has our God grown weak?' The God who created Heaven and earth promised to stand by the Jewish nation, if the people would comply with the observances of His law. He threatened to abandon them finally and forever, in case of disobedience. They repeatedly deserted Him, and when His Son came to redeem them, they rejected and crucified Him. If you would only take the trouble," he continued, "to read the record of His life written by His disciples, nearly thirty years before the destruction of Jerusalem, you will find that He once wept while foretelling its terrible fall. No, our God has not grown weaker; but He has chastised His guilty children who neglected His law, and despised His Christ, whom we Christians adore and serve. We do not worship a dead God, as you have been pleased to call Him, but

the living Christ, who arose from the dead by His own Divine power." The audience, which up to this time had been all attentive, smiled at the mention of a resurrection, and some of them went away having heard enough of Christian teaching to confirm their scepticism or their infidelity. "It may be," rejoined the priest of Serapis, "that you are different from the Jews; but one thing is certain, that Egypt will forever cling to her divinities, and especially to the mighty Serapis, who watches over our spiritual interests and answers our petitions by his oracles. "Behold," he continued, "his lovely temple; see it standing boldly on yonder eminence. A hundred steps lead to its portals; and its hundred porticos, and columns, and costly statuary attest the magnificence of its sacred worship. What is like it in the universe? and your little God is afraid to venture above ground. You worship Him in holes and caverns, and in darkened chambers." "We worship Him in spirit and in truth," retorted Cyprian, "and if the hatred of our enemies has driven us into caves and hiding places, our God is none the less able to hear and help us. We are tried in a fiery furnace, so that only what is good may remain with us; but a day will come when the whole world will worship the only true God. Your gods," he went on, "promise you earthly pleasure, they have not yet presumed to look beyond the dismal curtain of the grave; but our God for whose sake we long for and even court death, has promised us a never-ending life of bliss beyond the tomb. Our God dwells amongst us too, and feeds our souls with the heavenly food of His flesh; but though He often performs stupendous miracles by the hands of His lowly ministers, He does not speak ambiguous verses through the mouth of brazen statues." "What," said the priest of Serapis, "you insult our divinity," and he leaped about as if frenzied, and called on the crowd to tear the enemy of the gods to pieces. But the crowd was divided, most of them taking the side of Cyprian, and the enraged priest shouted for blood in vain.

Encouraged by their apathy towards the idolatrous priest, Cyprian descanted on the origin of the worship of Serapis. "You know, my friends," said he, "that this god is a foreigner in Alexandria; that his worship was brought here by the first Ptolemy, who had no better recommendation for him than that furnished in a dream; that he was the fetish of the barbarians

of Pontus ; and that to this day no two men are agreed as to whether he is the god of day or of night. No wonder his worship is confined almost to the walls of this city, and that Egypt, in general, refuses to acknowledge him." "Serapis," the great god of Alexandria," screamed the priest, "has shown his power, and countless thousands have heard his divine voice in yonder holy precinct." "Men of Alexandria," said the zealous Cyprian, "you know that there can be but one God, supreme and holy, who will not encourage a lie. Go and investigate this temple for yourselves, and you will find that the oracle of the brazen statue, which stands in that high fane is a fraudulent trick of the priests. I will go with you into the temple with this priest, and let him call on his god to destroy me if he can. I challenge him to the trial. But if, when I invoke my God, the statue of the false god Serapis will not crumble and fall to the earth, then you may indeed say Serapis is more powerful than Christ." "A fair offer," "A just proposal," Let's away to the trial." These and the like were the exclamations of the motley crowd, whose curiosity was aroused to the highest pitch. "Stop," shrieked the infuriated priest of Serapis, "do you wish to bring down on your guilty heads the anger of the god? Are you so foolish as to invite the lightning of his wrath by an impious curiosity, and a studied insult to the giver of all the blessings you enjoy? Do as you wish. I have now warned you ; but remember," and here his eyes dilated and seemed to flash fire from their pupils, "the moment the unbeliever enters the temple of the god who makes the Nile to overflow and fertilize its banks, the earth shall quake, the sun shall wane, the sea shall roll up its mass of waters upon the accursed land which harbors sacrilegious hands, and then all nature shall wither away into nothingness. Innocent and guilty alike shall perish—so it is written—the day the sanctuary of Serapis will be invaded." The face of the magician priest had become almost black ; and as he stood facing the hesitating students, the long forefingers of both his hands pointing towards heaven and raised above his head, a shudder seized even these reckless young men, whose superstitious dread of the unseen, was suddenly aroused by the direful threat, and none of them ventured farther to test the merits of their tutelary divinity. Then, as if unwilling again to arouse the ire of the priest, and yet

ashamed of their cowardice, they suddenly broke up and departed in silent and disappointed groups. It was a critical moment for the young champion of Christianity. He was in doubt how to act, but after a moment's reflection, he thought it best to retire without again calling on the dispersing audience, lest that, if once aroused by the magician, they might initiate a riotous attack on Christians wherever found. It would be no unusual incident, and one very pleasing to the pagan priests, and to many of the degraded natives of a country which worshipped cats and crocodiles, and went on one occasion to war to defend the honor of *these* outraged deities. Cyprian stepped down, therefore, from the bench on which he had been standing during his discourse, and passed along the empty stands in which, on stated days, the vendors of various market produce were accustomed to expose their goods. The pagan priest would have been delighted at the success of his threat, if it had not *so nearly* failed. He had barely saved the trickery of the priests of Serapis from an exposure which came only three centuries later. The feeling of relief which he experienced when the crowd ceased to pursue their dangerous inquisition, was choked by the awful remembrance of the suspense and agony he had suffered, before the result of the *ruse* became certain. This Christian, he thought, is subtle and eloquent, and on some other occasion his trick may succeed, while mine will fail; and then, good Serapis, our trade will come to an end. He shuddered, as already in fancy he saw the crowd rushing into the sanctuary, descending into the vaults, and tearing the statue to pieces, there to find the hollow place where the attendant would secrete himself, and speak or sing oracular verses, which a deluded populace listened to with awe, and committed to memory as the utterances of the Eternal Being. He shuddered, and then resolved to take the life of Cyprian on the first favorable occasion. He followed the young priest for the space of a few hundred yards, until he approached a beautiful grove of lofty and umbrageous elms, interspersed with a few tall sweet-scented pines.

In the grove a few children were playing about, but as no one else was visible, the villain rushed up stealthily behind Cyprian, and unsheathing a dagger, which he had kept concealed under his long cloak, aimed a blow at the unsuspecting

cleric. The blade passed harmlessly under his arm, cutting only his tunic in its progress. With a soldier's presence of mind, he turned quickly upon his enemy and hurled him to the earth before he could strike a second time. His military habits in fact, so mastered him for the instant, that he put his hand to his belt to grasp the sword he no longer carried.

The children who saw the attack, ran shrieking from the scene to their nurses or parents who were in a distant part of the grounds. Just then also, a company of troops appeared; and the fallen priest, having first thrown away his dagger, raised himself quickly from the ground and hastened to meet them. He told them that a Christian had attacked him and that he barely escaped with his life. His story was believed, and a rush was made for the victim of this murderous liar. Cyprian stood his ground and demanded that his accuser be taken prisoner; but he received only blows for an answer from the men, who only a few years before had helped to roast the flesh of Christian martyrs by slow fires. The pagan priest lifted his own dagger from the ground and holding it up before the soldiers, exclaimed, "behold the weapon he used against me: he hid it in here in the dry leaves." But all breathless, hereupon a female slave came running up and cried out, "hold; you are taking the wrong man away. This short man is the murderer. I saw him from a distance striking at the taller man; surely he must have left a mark." Quickly, the priest of Serapis felled the slave to the ground with a blow, and urged the soldiers to hasten away with their prisoner. The fallen slave was stunned by the fierce blow she had received and by the fall; but only for a moment. She was aroused by a sudden interest in the victim of the priest's treachery; and she might have been pierced through the body at that moment and still retain her consciousness. Blood was flowing copiously from her mouth when she rose up and started after the procession shouting, and calling upon the soldiers to listen to her story. Then a number of children who had fled when the attack was made, and who stood on the outskirts of the park, were accosted by the slave in these words in presence of the soldiers, "Children you were near by when this fight began." She was interrupted by the murderer, who a second time struck at her, but this time with less accurate aim. She

avoided the blow and continued to address the children, who were again beginning to run away from possible danger. "Who struck the blow with the sword, the tall or the short man?" she screamed. Again she lay prostrate on the ground, struck by the cowardly murderer. But one of the soldiers more suspicious than the rest, or less regardful of the pagan priest's dignity, advanced quickly and called on the children to halt. As soon as he did so, the murderer turned and fled back into the grove. The children confirmed the slave's recital, and Cyprian was set at liberty. Then he showed them where the dagger had passed through his clothing, and went to the assistance of his rescuer. The soldiers instead of pursuing the guilty man, went on their way, rather chagrined at having been deceived by the priest of Serapis, and sorry, because deprived of an opportunity to torture a Christian.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE SIREN'S BANQUET.

"With that methought a legion of foul fiends
Environed me and howled in mine ears
Such hideous cries, that with the very noise
I trembling waked, and for a season after
Could not believe but that I was in hell."

--Richard III.

IT will be remembered that a certain senator's son, Tullius by name, sought an introduction, through his father, to Irene. Frequently the lady was invited to his mansion, and a few times she accepted these invitations to dine with the family. The youthful heir of his father's honors and property, became every day more and more infatuated with the lady, who from the first discouraged his suit. But he considered her conduct as one of those artifices which women are often said to use in order to conceal their real inclinations. So Tullius hoped to overcome Irene's objections real or fictitious; and every repulse on her part, only caused him to advance more resolutely to the attack. At times he would be quite despondent, at others, elated by some word carelessly dropped from the lips of the woman he loved. He consulted oracles which always encouraged him, and paid his vows to the goddess who was supposed by the superstitious to favor love affairs, and finally, had recourse to the most equivocal of all means, the use of a love potion. But when the supper at which he chose to administer it was ready, Irene did not appear, and the charm failed to operate. Then he fell into dissipated habits, and strove to drown his cares in the wine cup. Poor Tullius! How many men, for one reason or other, pursue the same suicidal course to-day. Once, while reeling homeward under the influence of the dangerous beverage, he met Irene. With an at

tempt at sobriety which was extremely ludicrous, he steadied himself and made his bow ; but unfortunately he overbalanced himself, and fell almost into the gutter. He was not so completely intoxicated, however, as not to have seen a smile flit over the pale features, as he went down ; and when he arrived home, he was so distressed with the shameful situation, that he could hardly be kept from cutting his throat. When he became sober he knew that his prospects were less flattering than ever, and he began to hate the woman whom he had loved in vain. His worthy parent from time to time warned him against the seductions of wine ; and his sisters, who were more virtuous than most of their equals in age, besought him to have some regard for their honor as well as his own, and leave off a career that would bring discredit on all his relations. But Tullius knew better, even if he did not plead the universal immorality of the day in excuse ; so he merely jested with his monitors, or passed their well meant homilies over in silence. Whenever he was absent later than usual at night, his good sisters would indulge in some speculation regarding the cause of his unwonted dissipation ; but they invariably arrived at the same conclusion although by different routes,—“He is in love with that Irene who adores the horrid Jew,” they would say ; for the fact of Irene’s belief in Christ was soon well known. His father, too, knew or suspected the cause of his son’s folly. “It will wear off,” he would say, whenever approached on the subject ; “it will wear off with time. He is dreaming now, but he will wake up the first time he sees another good-looking woman.” Now, when the great Triumph of the two Emperors was at hand, Tullius, swallowing his hatred, made one more effort to at least approach the object of his affections. He begged by a special and trusty messenger to be allowed to escort Irene to the great games at the Circus. “You will in any event go,” said the messenger, “and you may just as well enjoy the drive with my young master. He is pining to do something to please you ; do not, therefore, fair lady, reject the nobleman’s offer. He fears you do not love him ; but he is so unselfish that he loves you tenderly withal.” Irene shrank back when the messenger offered her an elegant pearl and gold necklace, on the part of her admirer. “Tell your young master,” she said, striving to conceal her manifest emotion, “that I cannot encourage his suit by accept-

ing presents. I have already told him that I dare not wed him, and only his thoughtlessness saves his importunity from the appearance of insult. He is no doubt sincere, but I cannot suffer him to approach me as a suitor." "I am sorry," rejoined the other, "that I have no better answer for the son and heir of the noblest senator of Rome. However," he continued, "and I now speak for myself, not for him; if I were in his place I would resent your unreasonable toying with his affections. You are no match for one so wealthy as he, and besides,"—"Well," said Irene, coldly, as she advanced and held the door of the apartment half open—"finish your admonition and go." "It is this," said the messenger, who was boiling with rage, "I make no attempt to conceal it, you are one of the accursed sect that hate the gods of the Empire. If I were Tullius I would, I say, have my revenge." And with a parting look which might have made her quail, he took his departure. Irene answered this contumely with a smile, which must have made the brute feel very miserable, as she opened the door a trifle wider to facilitate his exit. He probably thought by this threat to frighten a young girl—a thing, a toy—in his opinion, and thus do on his own account a little service for his master. Or it may be that his master told him to exert a little pressure of this kind, as a last resource, if Irene should fail to accept his invitation. Whichever of these suppositions is the true one, it is certain that the attempt to intimidate was as fruitless as that to entice a woman, who was taught by her faith to look upon a departure from principle as the beginning of sin and the courting of dishonor.

When the ruffian went away Irene related all that had passed to the members of the household with whom she lived. Although they affected to think nothing of the threat, they really apprehended trouble; for what could not a senator do in a State where law and order were so often openly defied, or what justice might Christians expect from men who regarded them as enemies of the State? When Irene so suddenly disappeared, then, a few weeks after, they did not doubt but Tullius had something to do with her abduction; and as they could do nothing else, they prayed for her, and waited with anxiety for some news of her fate. When Tullius received Irene's firm refusal, he made up his mind very speedily to have "satisfaction," as

he called it. He had lowered himself, he thought, by asking such a woman to marry him when there were so many others available—perhaps not so handsome—but rich and educated. Then, for the first time in his life, he took an unsentimental view of the case, and asked himself aloud as he promenaded in his room with rapid paces. "What is beauty, anyway? It will fade from every woman's cheek, some day, and then they become insipid. If they have money there is something to fall back upon; if not—. But to be refused and insulted by the Christian minx is beyond endurance," he yelled, and brought down his fist on the table which stood in the middle of his room and held a choice bouquet put there by one of his sisters that morning. The vase, an idea in beaten gold, fell at his feet and received a kick that sent it into a remote corner where it was found and wept over next day by the gentle and disappointed donor. For a long time before he saw Irene, the senator's son had paid his addresses to Pontia, and was very well received; but that lady had so many admirers that it would be unsafe to venture an opinion as to his exact standing with her. As soon, however, as it became known that Julius was the favored one, a general change of front took place all around. Some of Pontia's suitors resolved to "drop" her, and others to steal a march on the accepted lover, and among the latter was Tullius. On her side Pontia, true to her character of a confirmed flirt, kept him in doubt and trifled with him as with several others who chose to play the same role. But when Julius went to the East with the army, Tullius had it all his own way; and many thought that he and Pontia were soon to become man and wife, while Julius was seeking for glory on the soil of Palestine. But when these very untrustworthy rumors were floating about, Tullius met Irene. Much as he had admired Pontia he had never really loved her; but he did not discover this fact till the fair Corinthian smote him with her charms. He straightway began to neglect Pontia's invitations, and to have her indirectly informed, after Irene had dined with him, that another fair victim lay within his grasp. For a while Pontia felt the slight keenly; but she strove to return the compliment by encouraging young Tullius's most inveterate enemy. Thus the two played at this little contemptible game—a game which alas, is the sole occupation of many a senseless pair to-

day, who like these ignore the first principles of social propriety. Then the crash came. Julius returned, and once more visited Pontia, whether invited or uninvited the world knew not; and Irene refused to accept the last invitation of Tullius. Baffled in every way the senator's son resolved to risk a doubtful experiment. He heard that Pontia had in some way become acquainted with Irene; and the conviction rushed suddenly upon him that she was the cause of the latter's extraordinary conduct towards him. To write to Irene was useless, and to attack Pontia would be fruitless to repair the harm; so he concluded to challenge Julius, his successful rival, to a gladiatorial combat. It was a doubtful experiment, because Julius was more expert in the use of arms, though not more agile nor powerful of body than Tullius. He had just written the challenge with a trembling hand, when a slave approached and handed him a sealed note. He took it, broke the seal stamped with Pontia's ring, and hastily read the contents—an invitation to dinner with her on that same evening. It was already late in the afternoon. He hesitated; he was puzzled. A feeling of pleasure was quickly succeeded by one of pain, and his color came and went, as in his then state of excitement he read and re-read the lines. He could now inflict a wound by refusing to go, and he was in the humor to do so; but then he reasoned thus: "Julius may be there, and I shall insult him in her presence; what a sting for both." He smiled with malicious glee, and signified to the slave that he would accept the invitation. The evening was sultry; and as Tullius walked briskly along the streets, which were filled, as they are to-day after sundown, by strolling bands of men, and gossiping women and playing children, he felt he was unsufferably hot. The heat within was indeed more annoying than the heat without him; and as he frequently ran against men and children (which last feat invariably brought down on him a volley of abuse from the injured mothers) the reader may estimate the disorder of his mind. As he neared his destination, his agitation became so great that he had to stop and grasp the pedestal of an equestrian statue which adorned the cross-road, and hold it firmly for some minutes. It was not cowardice that thus unmanned him; but intense excitement produced partly by the unusual vigor of his intentions, and partly by his recent excessive dissipation. When

his nervous fit had passed away, he proceeded on his walk towards the house where he hoped to deal two terrible blows. To his great and evident surprise he was met at the portal—an unusual welcome—by the lady Pontia in person, and ushered into her own apartments. Her face bore marks of recent weeping which she had not quite succeeded in removing, and her manner was so changed, that Tullius became more mystified every moment. Dinner was soon announced, and Tullius occupied the same seat as Julius had a few days before. The soups were of the best, the viands, choice and rare; and the wine old and of delicious bouquet. Between the courses, paid musicians played sweet airs in bewitchingly soft tones, and the spray which rose from the fountains in the atrium changed rapidly from the purest white to carnation hue, then to emerald or to azure, then blushed to deepest scarlet and finally returned to lily color in obedience to the tint projected on it by hidden and revolving lights. All the young man's sorrows vanished under the sense-absorbing variety afforded by his host; and as the time sped on he forgot her former slights—and even his jealousy of the interloping Julius. If Irene had deserted him, he now possessed another as beautiful, and wealthier and nobler, without an effort and with the suddenness and unreality of a pleasant dream. He wondered in fact if it could be real, and asked himself to what liberal goddess did he owe the unexpected conquest. And when by degrees it came out that Julius had deserted the noble lady, Tullius was too deeply intoxicated with the deliciousness of the situation, so artfully planned by the wily Pontia, to feel the sting of his own debasement, or even to wish to rise from it. But if this rich woman gave her hand to the maudlin Tullius, she had a scheme to work out in which she needed his aid. The hand was his, but the heart was still her own.

Twice after Julius had supped with her, on the evening of the games in the Circus, she had repeated her invitation, and met with a disappointment through the inability of her favorite to attend; but a third, a very pressing note from her reached him, as we learned in a former chapter, just when he received the Emperor's summons. He could have called on her that evening, she knew, but he failed to do so, and she knew the reason. He had neglected her intentionally, and her love for

him took on the flavor of wormwood. Revenge she must have for the unmanly affront, and she swore by Juno to accomplish the ruin of an unfaithful lover. If the writer were a dramatist he might paint on many pages the scene of Pontia's wrath; how, for instance, she wept and tore her hair, and flung herself on a sofa in an agony of inconceivable despair, and the like; but as he is not, he leaves these things to the imagination of his readers to fill up to their own satisfaction, and will be content to record the concluding fact that the lady felt very much relieved after having afflicted herself and some of the furniture and one of her unfortunate slaves, whom she stabbed in a shocking way with a pogniard; and that when the thought came to her to accept Tullius and assassinate Julius she became as blithe and as serenely tranquil as if she had been favored with a heavenly inspiration. It was then that she penned the invitation to the senator's son, and left no means untried to so captivate him as to make him the willing instrument of her vengeance. Rendered talkative and incautious with wine Tullius poured into the patient ear of his siren entertainer the story of his love for Irene, his disappointment and resolve, together with his hatred for Julius and his anxiety to meet him in deadly combat. "I thought you loved him," said the maudlin lover, "and I could not bear it." One of Pontia's smaller vices was intemperance, and on this occasion, she indulged almost as deeply in exhilarating beverages as her victim. The immediate result of this indiscretion was a confession of her unrequited love for Julius: and there she lost an opportunity. Had she been sober, this fact she might have concealed, and a duel now rendered impossible would have been for her a source of possible gratification.

Next day's sun was high in his course, when the inebriated Pontia returned to consciousness, and began to recall one by one the scenes of the past evening and night. She regretted only one thing, which was the foolish loquacity that beguiled her into a humiliating blunder. However, she returned to her first plan of action. Again and again Tullius and she spent their evenings together; and when she thought that the time was ripe for action, she revealed to her lover her desire of killing the recreant Julius. Startled a little at first, Tullius was led by the adroit reasoning of the murderess, to look upon

the assassination not only as an important act, but as a necessity for his and Pontia's happiness. Servius was the man who, by reason of his enmity towards Julius, could be most easily brought to do the deed, and do it well. He was convalescent when visited by Tullius, and expected soon to rejoin his legion which had gone into Gaul. Some days before his setting out, he received another visit from the senator's son, and was invited to dine with him on the eve of his departure, at Pontia's residence. The day arrived; the soldier was ready to set out, still somewhat weak, but hopeful and ambitious. He joined his rich hosts at a dinner such as he had never before enjoyed, or even hoped to enjoy. After the repast, the secret was for the first time broken to him, the secret cause of the unexpected friendship of two such noble persons. Assassinate Julius? Yes; nothing was more in accordance with his own wishes. But the reward for such a crime must be tempting indeed: the risk was great. Servius had accumulated a deal of wealth by carefully hoarding his pay, and by turning into cash the articles which, in the sacking of cities, had come into his possession. But he lost everything by gambling. When he started off to the East, he borrowed from the money lenders a small sum, but at an interest rate of twenty per cent. per month, or two hundred and forty per cent. a year. He expected to pay this out of his share of the spoils which Jerusalem would furnish; but his passion for gambling again overcame him, and the debt remained. He agreed, therefore, to murder Julius for a sum of money sufficient to pay his debts, which, by compound interest for a space of three years, had grown to an incredible size. Tullius and Pontia jointly assumed his debts by a bond, and next day Servius began his journey towards the Alps.

Julius had gone over the same road some time before in partial command of a legion, with a commission to put down various insurrections in Gaul and Germany. It was to entrust him with this command that the Emperor had sent for him, the moment he was opening Pontia's third invitation. After his interview with the Emperor, Julius took the crumpled note out of his pouch and read it. He read it because it was a habit to do so, not from ignorance of its contents. The seal revealed *them*. Then he reflected on the past, and strove to read the

future—behind him horrid memories, before him cruel doubt—and asked himself the question, "How employ the present?" Suddenly, he could not explain how, a sickening sensation of disgust took hold of him, and the name Pontia seemed to him to suggest all filth and ugliness. It would be very unphilosophic to heed such an irrational feeling, doubtless; but he felt that he could not overcome it or set it aside. He tore the note in pieces, and flung the pieces from him: and the gust of wind that whirled them away as if in a giddy dance, and sped them far from his sight, kissed his cheek with its warm breath and whispered, he fancied, in his startled ear, "Irene." Like a wanderer he left Italy, and crossing the Alps entered upon his duties without unnecessary delay. In Rhetia, and in distant Pannonia, he received recruits who professed the name and faith of Christ, and in almost every city in Gaul he found communities of Christians, and heard of numerous martyrs, who a few years before had suffered for the faith. They were held in veneration by the people of their city, who prayed to them with full assurance that they would receive assistance from them. On one occasion he overheard a young soldier praying the Apostles Peter and Paul to assist his mother. Julius asked the young man, who looked sad, who these gods were he had been addressing, "Not gods," replied the Christian soldier, "but ministers of the Lord," "And do you think they can help you?" asked Julius curiously. "Yes," answered the other, "they were the friends of God, and they have more power perhaps, to ask good things for us now, than when they were on earth," "Why," said Julius, smiling, "how can dead men have any power?" "Ah," replied the soldier, "you are not a disciple or you would know that the virtuous do not die; they live and are happy, and will be happy for ever. My mother," he continued, "has just died, and she may be suffering for sin; and this is why I ask the martyrs to pray for her speedy admission to the presence of the Lord." "I thought," said Julius, "that you Christians consigned the wicked to everlasting tortures; how, then, can your mother, if suffering, be released; what does this mean?" "It is true," answered the soldier, "that the very wicked ones, who have murdered or plundered, or been obscene or the like, will be punished eternally. But all sins do not merit such chastise-

ment ; and a temporary fire purges those who commit small sins, until they become like refined gold, fit to stand in the most holy presence of God." "A strange, but a reasonable philosophy," mused Julius, as he turned about and walked away. "Great wrong-doers suffer for ever, lesser ones for a time, and the good have power to help one another, and even to relieve the pains of their brethren. Immortal life, the reward of good actions, and a resurrection of the mortal flesh—strange philosophy." He spoke thus to himself, half aloud, as he retired to a shady spot under a huge oak, and lay down on the thick grass. It was the second day after a battle, in which his arms had been so victorious that the enemy was annihilated. He was fatigued, for he had been in the thickest of the fight, and slain great numbers of the enemy with his own sword. The spot where he now lay was like an oasis in the desert of rock that stretched away on every hand, and rose towards the east in rugged and precipitous blocks, one above another, to the height of several thousand feet. On his left hand was a ravine, through which a noisy mountain torrent rushed madly, leaping from crag to crag, and lashing itself into foam and spray. All else was quiet. The sky was blue and cloudless, with the single exception of a long, fleecy vapor which flitted over the towering peaks, and dragged from one to another, till they looked as if clothed with a veil of the finest gauze. Looking away up the side of the mountain range, as far as the eye could reach, Julius saw standing out in bold relief from the grey and brownish rocks, a fine silver-colored thread, which glittered in the sun's rays with great brilliancy. He looked a long time at it without being able to tell what it was, but as he followed the line of this object downwards, with his eyes, he saw another silver thread nearer himself, and below this a third, none of which, however, were touched by the sun's rays. Each thread grew larger as it seemed nearer, and although the nearest was miles away, he concluded that they were all the same stream, which, issuing from a large opening, after a long subterraneous course, tumbled abruptly into the ravine beside him. As he became more familiar with the Alpine countries, he learned that these tiny streams which are fed by the sempiternal snows which fall where the foot of man has never trod, are very numerous ; and that whilst they furnish

many a river of North Italy with its limpid waters, when in their normal condition, they sometimes become so swollen and violent as to overflow the countries lying at the foot of the range. Julius was impressed with the majesty of the landscape, and reflecting that these senseless things, this rock which had been spurned by Hannibal, these waters which had rolled on for ages in the same well-worn beds, would outlive him as they had outlived the great African conqueror, and boast their rugged charms to a thousand generations yet unborn. "Why do men alone die?" he said aloud, as he stretched out his right hand towards the immortal giants of stone, which had neither speech nor thought to answer him. "Why do they not live on for ever?" A cloud arose from behind one of the snow-clad peaks, and passing fleetly across the sun, cast down a shapeless shadow that swept the rocky plain. He repeated his question to the sun, which blazed in tranquil and unapproachable majesty, mounting every instant higher and higher in the cerulean vault. A whirling wind issued from the gorge and whisked up the long grass blades into the billowy motion of the sea. Its breath was icy; the leaves above him trembled in its chill embrace, and by their rustling spoke their discontent. Other answer there was none to the mysterious question put by Julius to all inanimate nature. How beautiful this Christian theory, he thought; how consoling it must be. "Why should I live for fame," he said, "if no undying spirit, now hid within me, shall live on when these limbs are cold, and be conscious of the praise of men? What motive have I for being humane, not cruel, loving not hateful, just not unjust, if with death all ends for me? How can any act be just, or the contrary, if there be no law which makes them so? Yet I know and feel as all men have known and felt, that some acts are just and others not. If men are not immortal, what is cruelty but a name? Yet I cannot admire Nero. All men hate him. Why is this?" As the shapeless shadow, which for a time hid the sun, passed away, leaving his glory untarnished; and as the icy blast, born in the yawning depths, sped onward, leaving the tree and the grass in peace, so the chilling mist of incredulity, at that moment, shrank from the generous soul of the Roman soldier, and left him in the peaceful belief in a future life, and the immortality and responsibility of the soul. He now perceived

that dead matter was not the Divinity, and, consequently, not eternal. It was ever changing, therefore not divine. He perceived, too, that man was superior to this dead matter, in having not only sense, but reason as well. He saw that everything in nature followed a law, manifestly the will of an Omnipotent Lawgiver. He understood, that unless such a Lawgiver existed, right and wrong would be synonymous terms; and against such an hypothesis his reason, and that of mankind rebelled. "Either then," said he, "all men are irrational, or a Supreme Being exists." He raised himself from his reclining posture to his knees, and for the first time in his life, made a formal act of adoration to the Creator of Heaven and Earth. He was not yet a Christian, it is true; but he had received the grace which, with the consent of his own will, could not fail to lead him to the truth. Remaining in the same attitude—for he was dead to all the world without him—he followed up the vein of thought which he had struck. His great difficulty had been to reconcile the coexistence of a Supreme Being and moral evil—a problem which, by the way, is as absorbing to-day as then. He felt the conflict of which the Apostle St. Paul speaks so eloquently, going on within him; a conflict between his reason, aspiring to a great good, and his will drawing him violently in the direction of what he knew was wrong. He would have been unable to account for such a state of things—as Plato was—had not the doctrine of original sin, as explained to him by Irene, come up in his memory with peculiar freshness. "Our reason," said she, on one occasion, "is ashamed of the perversity or wickedness of our inclinations; but this would not be so if perversity were an essential part of our nature; for reason is never ashamed of its own natural qualities. We were not, therefore, destined originally to be wicked—inclined towards evil; but on the contrary, prone to do good, and practise righteousness. If, as is unfortunately the case, our nature has reason to be ashamed of its weakness, is it not clear that our nature has, to some extent, deteriorated? It has fallen from its high estate, and what is the cause? There can be but one sufficient cause for such a calamity. The avenging anger of a Creator disrespected and disobeyed by our ancestors. We are suffering because of the guilt of our original parents." This argument which

shows conclusively the fact of our guilt, while it explains the existence of evil in the world, seemed cloudy when Julius heard it; but as it now came back to him, in his enlightened state, he saw its cogency, and accepted the truth. "Yes," he said aloud, as the whole train of reasoning passed through his mind, "no theory explains it so well as this; I see that we must be under a curse. Evil is not the work of God, but man's work, or a punishment of man's imprudence." He paused for a moment. His question, "why do men die?" seemed already answered, and he would probably have said, "death is but the last stroke of Divine justice;" but the thought, which was ready to find utterance, remained unspoken; for at that moment a powerful blow, or rather a push, sent him headlong into the chasm, within a few feet of whose gaping and precipitous jaws he was kneeling. The hand that pushed him over the brink was that of Servius, the paid assassin, who had been looking for a chance since the day of his arrival in the camp, to execute his murderous purpose. When his victim, on this day, wandered away from the camp, he followed him cautiously till he saw him take up the dangerous position so well suited for a tragedy, at the gorge. Then he crept stealthily up behind the tree and waited for his opportunity. The roar of the cataract was favorable to his design, and the position of his enemy such as to render unnecessary the two edged blade with which he had first intended to strike him from behind. He chuckled with delight when he reflected how easily he had earned his fee; but the smile was quickly frozen. Though on the field of battle a stranger to fear his pulse beat strongly and his cheek was pale as he approached the unsuspecting soldier. But his task was unexpectedly easy, and in a moment the deed was done.

When he began to breathe freely and had composed his nerves, he looked cautiously over the flank of the ravine. It was black down there, where the spray allowed him occasional glimpses of the craggy depths. Fit place for such a crime! A sort of whirlwind drove the spray about into fantastic shapes, and once he thought the face of Julius looked out through the vaporous film—and with such a look! He shuddered and drew back, still staring at the mist. "Bah!" said he, "what a fool I am; and he looked down once more. Away below

there a spur stuck out with a dull point, and it looked red—bloody ! “He struck that on his voyage to Hades,” thought the murderer, striving to be merry. But one of those icy drafts which now and then dart upwards from gloomy abysses seized upon the culprit, and seemed to freeze his very marrow. He got up off his hands and knees, got up suddenly, and started back to the camp.

The camp was pitched on the sloping side of a mountain. It was a perfect square ; but instead of the usual embankment or earthwork, it was surrounded with a line of large stones, backed by a kind of stockade made of pine logs. Everything about and around it was noiseless and motionless except here and there a sentry, who paced slowly in his well-beaten path, looking neither to right nor left, but ever in one direction. A line of men was just visible in the distance, driving small carts, on which were placed barrels containing a supply of water for the next twenty-four hours. The white tents of the officers dotted at regular intervals the enclosure, and shone out in relief against the background of the black-painted waggons and fallen trees, like miniature mounds of recent snow. It was nearly two miles to the camp from the spot where Julius was pushed over the precipice. The road lay round several volcanic heaps, down a declivity, up a hill, then over a bottomless rent of irregularly shaped stones and shale which had been washed down by spring floods, or borne down with winter avalanches from the lofty peaks and deposited in the comparatively level plains at their foot. Servius traversed the road with a strange feeling of approaching danger. He had perpetrated his first and only murderous deed, and the apprehension of punishment which ever haunts the followers of Cain was strong upon him and was fast dementing him. He regretted, pagan though he was, having committed the act, and with his heart, as well as his lips, he cursed the day he met the cruel Pontia. He was avenged on Julius, it is true, but for what ? Julius had really done him no wrong ; and the small matter of a woman's preference now appeared to him not worth the life of a Roman lieutenant. Thoughts like these were new to Servius. Strange fact it is that men judge most rationally of the malice of sinful deeds when they have rendered themselves guilty of some very bad act. It seems that the conscience seizes on such

occasions to effectually, if possible, withdraw the sinner from his evil course by protesting vigorously against the crime.

That morning Servius, in anticipation of the execution of his purpose, had forwarded a letter to Tullius, and one to Pontia, informing them of the success of his design. The courier had set out for Rome at daybreak. Several days must necessarily elapse before the instigators of the crime would learn of its commission, and they alone would know the secret of the loss of a Roman commander who was not killed in battle. Servius shook off his fears and appeared among his companions with an affectation of indifference which he did not really feel. In spite of his desire to show levity in his conduct, he felt that the attempt was vain; and he was moreover sure that if any suspicious observer was near, his guilt would at once be detected. But the crime was not yet known among the troops, and not until late at night was any uneasiness manifested as to the fate of Julius. Servius had retired to his tent and fallen asleep, when the report was whispered abroad that the Commander was missing. Searching parties were sent out in every direction, and Servius, as a superior officer, was approached to ascertain whether he knew anything about the missing lieutenant. Those who came to look for Servius found him lying on the ground, howling like a hyena. They tried to wake him, but for a long time were unsuccessful. At last he started up; but by the vacant stare of his eyes they knew he did not recognize them. A physician was called, who saw at a glance either that he was a maniac or was laboring under an attack of delirious fever. His cries were piteous. He begged to be rescued from the Furies, who, he said, were scourging him with their serpent-hair. "The serpents are devouring me," he shrieked as he cowered in a corner, and strove with his hands to defend himself against his imaginary enemies. "You are looking for Julius," he went on; "I did it, but they are guilty. Tell Julius to come to me; he will not let the Furies lash me so. Oh, take them away; they feed on my heart! They are stinging me to death. Julius! Pluto! Away cursed Furies, cursed Pontia." With a wild maniacal yell he leaped up and fell forward on his face a corpse. The doctors thought that his former sickness had again attacked him, and the mystery was as far as ever from a solution.



CHAPTER XX.

A PAGAN'S MORALITY.

WE must now return for a time to the house of our friend, Nilos, at Alexandria. When Anna reached her apartments she went upon her knees, and besought the Lord to forgive the woman who had so severely wounded her. She heard nothing of the punishment which had come upon her persecutor until Zelta informed her of it. This poor slave was shocked when she saw her friend suffering; but the thought that her pains were borne for justice sake somewhat consoled her. She at once proceeded to foment the wound, and render whatever assistance she was able to one whom she must look upon hereafter not as an ordinary friend, but as a martyr. On leaving the apartment, she met the old negress, whose hateful countenance was distorted into a hideous smile, the manifestation of the joy she felt on account of the sufferings of Anna. "How is the young lady?" she inquired, ironically, "our young mistress," she added, with a repulsive grin. "For shame," replied Zelta, "what harm has she ever done you, that makes you hate her?" And she passed on, regardless of the filthy and abusive answer which the Nubian hurled after her. A short time after this the negress was told of the miracle; but instead of softening her heart, it only inflamed her the more against the religion that Zelta and Anna professed; and she repeated her incantations and devilish spells with the hope of destroying both these Christian women.

Zelta once said to her when she learned of her magic spells, "Sister, how can you hope to fight against the Creator of all things? In your miserable charms you employ things which He has made out of nothing, and you think you can hurt Him

or His friends with them." "Don't call me 'sister,'" said the Nubian between her teeth; "you hate me, and I hate you, and all Christians. You can't deceive me, calling me sister. The spells of Houdou can upset all the plans of your God. Why didn't he help Anna when my charm broke in her pale face and spoiled her nice looks?" she added with a triumphant look in her brutish eyes. "Our God," replied Zelta, calmly, who pitied the black's ignorance, "our God takes His time to avenge His own: He has an eternity to do it. But I warn you—she assumed a decisive tone—that the sword of the wicked shall enter into their own hearts, and their bow shall be broken." The Negress answered the threat with a defiant and blasphemous expression, which appalled the Christian slave, and almost caused her to pray that an example would be made of the sinful wretch, for the benefit of others. But there was no need for such a prayer. It was the day for the funeral. Following the Egyptian custom, the body was embalmed, and placed, with many heathenish observances, in a stone vault, built into the side of a hill. After the ceremonies Anna, who had been for many days unable to appear out of her room, took a walk in the garden accompanied by Zelta. Her face was now well, only a small scar marking the place of the wound. They were met by the Nubian, who at once began to mumble her incantation. "Hail, mistress," said the wretch, bowing the knee before the convalescent girl, "We shall all ask the Master to marry you." And she pointed a scornful finger at the mark in Anna's face. "How pretty you look," the negress continued, "what a fine mistress you would be, with your broken nose." The women took no notice of her but passed on, followed by the most insulting epithets, which the degraded soul of the half savage could invent. Half an hour after, screams were heard issuing from the kitchen, and several slaves, among them Zelta, ran in to ascertain their cause. The Nubian lay in the middle of the room on the floor, tearing her flesh with her nails and biting her arms and naked shoulders with her teeth. "She is mad," cried all in terror: and they turned to flee, when Zelta stopped them, saying it was cruel to leave the poor wretch to destroy herself without making an effort to save her. Anna now appeared, and with the others advanced to help the sufferer. When they came

near, the stench was unendurable, and from every pore of the Nubian's body vermin swarmed forth. All except the two Christian servants turned away in horror and disgust. They strove to lift the unfortunate woman, but her violence redoubled, the moment she saw Christians approaching her. She blasphemed Christ as the cause of her affliction, and called wildly, fiercely, on her fetishes to give her some relief. Anna intreated, implored her to have confidence in the true God, who could heal her in a moment, if she would but believe in Him. "You have seen His power manifested in this house by wonders," said Zelta, "and you ought to call upon His mercy now that you see your gods cannot help you." "Away with your God" exclaimed the negress; "leave me, leave me, I hate any God you adore." Then her eyes fell from their sockets, and she rolled upon the floor, cursing God and invoking death. Even the pagan slaves, men and women, who by this time had gathered around, and stood at a distance, looking in through the door and windows, shouted to her to invoke the God of the Christians. Nilos himself was stunned, when he saw the example made of the blasphemer, and confessed that her malice deserved this awful fate. For hours the victim of wrath writhed in throes of lancinating pain; and at last, when unable to move hand or foot, she cried out, "they are eating me up. I am dying: the Christian God has killed me." Then she added feebly, "my gods were false to me; they have forsaken me." She confessed to the power of God, but like the wicked Antiochus, all too late; and her blasphemies, repeated with a hardened heart, in spite of the evidence of her obtuse senses, now closed around her like the arms of an octopus, to embitter her dying moments. The revolting sight brought a profound awe upon all who saw it, and within a few months every one of Nilos' household, except himself, were baptized. His business affairs at this time were very absorbing—a fact which drew him away from his religious investigations—and the grace of conversion was consequently deferred for another and perhaps more profitable occasion.

Anna had now so far advanced in favor with Nilos, that many thought the ironical words of the old Nubian would turn out prophetically. His bearing towards her was marked with extreme courtesy; and in a very short space of time, she was instal-

led as general manager of domestic affairs. His children loved her and would not have been displeased to see her take the place of their deceased mother. The slaves looked up to her as a kind of guardian angel, and if anything went wrong with one of them, she was at once approached in the most confidential manner; and her advice would be followed implicitly. Needless to say, Zelta was transported with delight at the turn things had taken, and saw in them the hand of a kind and merciful Providence, who often forestalls the everlasting reward of good works with an hundred-fold in this world.

One evening as she and Anna were sitting between the red marble columns of the portico which looked out upon the Mediterranean, their conversation turned upon the former life of the High Priest's daughter, and she recounted for her companion the story of Jewish misfortunes from the Babylonian captivity down to the dreadful siege which ended with the destruction of the city and the Temple. "It was as Christ hath said" she exclaimed, as the history of the nation lay spread out before her mind. "He foretold the dire calamity, and the prophecy was repeated by Simon Peter. The Jews in this last war were in the right, from a national point of view. They fought for their liberty and their firesides; they fought to expel tyranny and Rome's false gods! But they failed in spite of their good cause; failed because the blood of the Son of God, which they had invoked upon their heads and their children's, hung over them. Their cause was good; but the hand of the Lord was chastening them; hence they failed." "No wonder," said Zelta, "that Jesus wept over the city, as He foresaw how dreadful would be the catastrophe." "Ah," rejoined her companion, "He loved His people, even when all was lost by their crimes."

After a brief period of silence Anna turned to Zelta, and addressed this abrupt question to her: "Sister, you were telling me once about a quarrel which you witnessed in the park; pray tell me all about it now." "I had quite forgotten about it," replied Zelta, "but it was a strange event. It was the first time I saw a priest violently resenting an injury." Then she proceeded with the relation of what she had seen, and what she had suffered at the hands of the priest of Isis. The reader will now recognize who the slave was that saved the life of Cy!

prian, when the murderous attempt was made on him. "Twice the pagan tried to pierce him," she went on; "and twice an angel turned the point aside. Then like a flash of lightning, he turned upon his assailant and hurled him to the earth. Oh! how my heart beat when I saw the soldiers taking him away, and I thought I should never overtake them, so as to convict the real murderer." "But you did not know it was a priest who was attacked," said Anna, inquiringly. "Not at first," replied the slave; "but as I approached, I recognized him, and I was so astonished and frightened that I could hardly speak." "How providential that the children saw the deed committed," said Anna in a tone of gratitude. "Yes, truly, the hand of God was in it," rejoined Zelta, "for had they not appeared, I would have been killed, and our priest would have been condemned for murder, and no one would stand forth to defend his good name." "What a scandal it would be, and how opportunely averted," said Anna, as she reflected how the pagans would rejoice over the reputed crime of a disciple. "How kind he was to me," said the slave, pursuing her narrative. "When I opened my eyes (for I was sorely stunned by the second blow I received), it was like a vision of the Saviour to behold God's minister bathing my brow—the brow of a slave—to see those little children holding the vase of water, and anxiously waiting for my recovery. How their little faces brightened when they saw me revive; and one of them—a sweet little boy—clapped his hands so hard together for glee, that a cup of water, which he was holding, was spilt upon my breast. In a few minutes I was able to sit up, and in half-an-hour I felt that I could walk home; but before I started, the young priest gave me his blessing." "Did you ask his name," said Anna, full of admiration for his charity and courage. "I did," said the other; "but how handsome he was, like an angel truly. Like the one, I fancied, that conducted the young Tobias on his journey." "You said it was by his height the children distinguished him," said Anna; "was he then so very tall?" "More than a head above any of the soldiers," replied Zelta, "and somewhat thin, like one on whose frame long fasts had told severely." "He is not a native then," said Anna, musing, as she plied her needle more rapidly on a silk ornament for the altar. "He is, perhaps, a Greek: what color was his hair?"

"Yellow and delicate as the rays of yonder mist-clad moon," replied Zelta, in her figurative way. "How beautiful must be the countenance of the Lord, when mere men are shaped so well," said the daughter of Jerusalem. "And," added Zelta, "how perfect must be the love which draws such men as he to God, and causes them to forsake all earthly treasures and beauty for His service." "But what did you say his name was, sister? Perhaps he will some day preach for us at the house of wealthy Arbax." "His name," said Zelta, "is Cyprian. Why do you start, dearest Anna; you look as if you had but just recovered from the embrace of the plague. Do you know him?" "Know him," echoed Anna, after a pause; "would that I did;" and she sighed with embarrassment. "The name, perhaps, is familiar to you," said Zelta; "but why bedew the grass with your tears, dear sister? Have I said aught to afflict you!" "That name, *that* name," sobbed Anna aloud, as if unconscious of Zelta's presence. Then suddenly checking herself, she added, addressing her companion, "I am not well, Zelta, my sister; let us say, good-night." "Good-night, dear sister, and the Lord keep us in His favor," replied the slave. Anna went in, and Zelta stood awhile perplexed, looking after her; then as she turned to go to her own quarters, she noticed the silk ornament lying on the ground: her mistress had dropped it in her agitation. She picked it up and brought it to her own room, not wishing to disturb Anna that night.

Is it necessary to relate here the cause of Anna's sudden illness? The reader has not forgotten how many sweet associations, and how many bitter ones, were wound about the name of Cyprian and interwoven with her own heart. She did not as yet suspect that Cyprian the priest and her cousin were identical. It was the mere mention of the name that awakened the record of the past with all its sad and desperate incidents. Her prayers that night were full of distractions, which she was unable either to put away, or to struggle with; and she laid her head upon a sleepless pillow, to count the lingering hours of a seemingly endless night. Morning came at last, but it brought with it no sunshine. The sky was overcast with thick clouds of an unusual kind, which seemed like fine dust rather than mist, and moved slowly in a direction from west to east. The sun looked through the peculiar fog like the dull red glim-

mer of the Pharos lantern on a wintry night. The phenomenon was witnessed by every one, and a superstitious dread fell upon the pagan portion of the community, who regarded it as a forerunner of some great calamity. Looking out seaward, it was impossible to discern the boats in the harbor, or in fact to distinguish large objects at the distance of a quarter of a mile. Some people fancied that they found dust on their garments and on flat surfaces not under cover ; and this proved to be true ; as the sailors who had just entered the harbor reported that they had been detained at anchor unable to see their way for the clouds of dust which filled the air, and fell upon everything on the decks of their vessels. Then the learned men took to collecting as much as they could get of this dust, and upon examination found it to be ashes which had escaped from some volcano, and was driven down upon their coast by the wind. A week passed away, however, before the news reached Alexandria that two cities had been overwhelmed by the scoræ and ashes which broke from Mount Vesuvius (Vesuvius it was called then), burying everything out of sight and suffocating all of their inhabitants who were not fortunate enough to escape by the sea. For many days previous to the eruption, smoke was noticed rising from the summit of the famous mountain, and assuming peculiarly hideous shapes and forms. Little heed was, however, paid to the matter, and everything in and about Pompeii and Herculaneum went on as if no terrible disaster were impending. Business was brisk, and sinful amusements progressed in spite of the volcano's threatenings. Suddenly the earth shook, and a pitchy darkness overspread those cities and all the surrounding country, while molten lava belched from the yawning crater, and poured down the mountain's sides. As it rushed downwards, its fiery breath consumed the numerous vineyards and picturesque villas, which seemed to stand one upon the other, against the sunny slope. But the showering ashes took away the breath of all living creatures, and piled up with incredible rapidity in the streets and by-ways, till the doomed cities were entirely covered. For eighteen centuries they lay buried in their ashy tomb ; and would have remained so till the judgment day, had not an accident brought to light, a few years ago, their long forgotten sites.

In a few days the air at Alexandria was free from the strange dust which had darkened the sea, and spread consternation among the inhabitants of countries hundreds of miles from Vesuvius; and the Egyptian metropolis once more basked in the torrid sunshine. Anna had resumed her wonted tranquillity, and everything at the residence of Nilos seemed to float calmly down the stream of time, when an incident occurred which hastened the conversion of the merchant.

A brother of Nilos, a very wealthy man, who was engaged in the Eastern silk-trade, was visiting the family for some weeks, previous to an extended pleasure tour to Italy. His faith, if he had any, was antichristian; and he often chided his brother for his laxity in allowing his slaves to choose their religion. Nevertheless, he took a certain fancy for Anna, and although he detested her "foreign God," as he called Christ, he could not help admiring her unassuming and virtuous conduct. His fancy became a positive liking, and his liking grew into the proportions of an overmastering passion. Cautiously he approached his brother, with a view to having her transmitted to himself. "She would suit admirably to choose and assort my silks and other precious goods," said the schemer, concealing his real motive. But Nilos was unyielding; she was too valuable to himself, and he felt that to sell her to his brother would be to throw away a treasure. Perhaps he had a lurking reason besides, which he did not wish to make known to the brother; very few men in his position would, and least of all if they suspect that they are dealing with a rival. "No," he maintained, "I would not part with her for ten thousand sesterces." "Ridiculous," the brother would rejoin, walking away.

Finding that he was unsuccessful in his attempt to obtain possession of Anna, he resolved to approach her personally, and to propose marriage, if necessary, in order to secure her. He had learned her history; and although it would be a disgrace to marry an ordinary slave, it was plain that no such stigma would attach to a union with a lady, whom the fortune of war had precipitated from the highest social standing into the lowest. Accordingly he began to show her marked attention, a fact which did not escape the notice of the household, and excited comments, some favorable to her, some not, among the

children and the slaves. At length he declared boldly his love for her ; and while expatiating on the great difference in their respective social conditions, and his own wonderful condescension in proposing to her, he expressed himself, nevertheless, overjoyed at the prospect of making such a handsome and virtuous woman the partner of his life and a sharer in his wealth. "You shall be free," he said, "and where my home is, no one will ever know that you were once my brother's slave." It is currently stated that the end of a woman's existence is marriage, or a happy marriage ; and there are those who would call Anna a fool if she rejected the Egyptian's proposal. Yet there are virtuous people in the world who take quite a different view of the situation, and among them was this slave, who, far from being dazzled by the golden opportunity, was greatly dejected. Her thoughts, from the first inkling of the meaning of the conversation, reverted to Cyprian, and it seemed to her a sort of treason to accept of any other man's love. Yet she knew that refusal would incense the Egyptian, and most probably cause her a great deal of trouble. When he had finished speaking, however, her mind was fully made up. Cyprian, indeed, she never expected to see ; but even a nobler motive than fidelity to his memory urged her to reject any matrimonial engagement whatever. She had heard the dignity of continence praised by her Christian teachers ; and the words of St. Paul recommending this virtue, rang in her ears with the sweetness of a chime from Paradise. As she had resolved, so she spoke. "Brother of my master," said she, "your proposal is honorable, and I thank you." Here her humility could not keep down the blush of indignation which leaped to her cheeks, as she thought of how he had patronized her, and she added : "A few years ago I was not a slave, and I could have been married according to my rank. I loved then ; I still love ; so I must refuse your offer."

She had kept her eyes on the ground until the last sentence ; but as she pronounced the final words, she looked steadily into the Egyptian's face. He laughed harshly, a bitter laugh of disappointed rage. He had humbled himself—as he took it—in proposing to her ; and so thoroughly had the belief taken hold of him, that he overlooked the usual forms of courtesy and put his case before her, as if he were bargaining with a

Bedouin. She resented this ; and it angered him to feel that she was right. "We are here alone," he said, then barring her progress, as she moved towards the door, "and you shall be mine whether you will or no." She glided away from him to the other end of the room, and shouted at the open window for help. Then facing her would-be destroyer, she fearlessly, almost fiercely, confronted him. "Villain," said she, "I am not a slave where my honor is concerned ; my will is my own. You have the power to kill me, but you cannot dishonor me. Use your sword on a defenceless woman ; but the God who protected Joseph in this very land from the malicious and cowardly revenge of a faithless wife, can also, if He wishes, save me from your attacks."

For a moment the Egyptian was abashed, foiled, driven back, and his hand crept away, as if through shame from the sword which he had seized, when stung by the fiery words of Anna's reproach ; but he soon returned to his lawless state of mind. "Slave," he exclaimed furiously, "I will trample your honor in the dust, and your God is powerless——." The door opened, and Nilos, with Zelta and another slave entered in breathless haste. "What means this ?" said Nilos, as soon as he had recovered his breath. The dark features of his brother had assumed a greenish hue, and a savage light shone in his eyes. On the otherhand Anna stood like a statue of the goddess of Victory, calm amid the storm that raged around her. She was confident, she said afterwards, that God would save her, and no symptom of weakness manifested itself throughout the trying scene. She came forward and threw herself at the feet of her master ; tears were now fast rolling down her scarlet cheeks. The man who had tempted her was too enraged to speak ; he walked out of the room abruptly, and disappeared from view in the shrubbery. The situation needed no questioning. Nilos understood it at a glance ; and his respect for Anna restrained the curiosity he would have wished to gratify. He turned away then from the scene with a feeling of mixed awe and anger. He had a proof, before his eyes, of the sincerity of Christian virtue, that excited his deepest veneration ; but, on the other hand, he had discovered the treachery of his brother, who, failing to purchase the woman he fancied, strove to render her useless to her master.

As soon as the brothers met, Nilos reproached the other with his unmanly conduct, and demanded why he should treat a friend, brother, and host, with such ingratitude. "Nilos," said the other, who had somewhat mastered himself, "I was in love with that Jewess (Nilos bit his lip). I offered her marriage, and by all the gods in Egypt, do you believe me, the slave rejected me." Nilos was immensely relieved; he was avenged. "Then you tried violence," I suppose, said he bitterly. "You might spare the taunt, Nilos," replied the brother; "it is hard to be put down by a slave, especially by one who prates about her honor." "She was once a free woman," said Nilos, "and she has not forgotten how to respect herself." "What care I," exclaimed the other; "she is a slave now, and a slave is the property of her master. And, by Memnon," he continued, "perhaps while I am your guest I may use your property as you would yourself; that's my idea of hospitality. Bah! honor in a slave" he went on, accompanying the words with a scornful grimace; "and to threaten that her God would protect her honor." "Perhaps He has done so," replied Nilos, sharply, interrupting him; "and I tell you, furthermore, that I respect the honor even of a slave. I would not force any of them; nor use them as you have suggested; and if you wish to continue my guest, you must respect them in the same way." "Oho," exclaimed the other, opening wide his eyes, "I suppose you will join her infernal religion next, and invite me to follow your example." "I have great respect for that religion," replied Nilos, his brow knitting. "I have seen prodigies performed by its followers, which surpass the magical wonders of our priests, and——," "Nonsense," interrupted the brother; "Don't talk to me about those impostors, priests." "As you will," said Nilos; "but the Christians do not seem to be impostors, and as for their virtues—well, you have a proof of their sincerity." "Yes," said the brother, grating the words through his teeth, "I have a proof of female obstinacy, stupidity." "You call chastity obstinacy, then?" queried Nilos. "And you call it virtue, I suppose," answered his brother. "We would regard it as such in our own dear mother," retorted Nilos, with a home thrust. "Doubtless we would, but——," "But what?" said Nilos. "Can that which is vir-

tue in our mother be aught else in other women, my brother?" "Even in slaves," said the brother, ironically. "Even in slaves," said Nilos, not heeding the other's flippancy, "virtue is virtue, never vice. Anna was not a slave ten years ago," he went on with provoking clearness of argument; "and she was virtuous then, because chaste. In what has she changed since except social condition? And now she is—obstinate because she is still chaste. And even the other slaves, who were born so, came from mothers or grand-mothers who were once free; and in what are they different from other women? Brother, I have come into the conviction that a slave is as much to be respected, and more to be pitied, than free men and women. I am not a Christian; but if anything could induce me to embrace that religion, it is the correct views of nature and humanity, preached and practised by its adherents." "Nilos," said his brother, "I will take my departure to-morrow." "As you wish, brother," replied the merchant, who was evidently anxious to avoid further entanglements; "but," he added soothingly, "I hope you will not go away displeased." "That as it may," said the other, walking gloomily away. Next day, faithful to his threat, he set out for Sicily. When just ready to leave, he called Nilos aside. "I know, brother, that you think a great deal of that Christian slave," he said gravely; "perhaps, even you will marry her; I would kill you if,—but enough; I will not trouble you again. However, I cannot help giving you a little advice before I go. I have travelled, in the pursuit of my business, from the Pyramids to far Ethiopia, and thence to the Pillars of Hercules; from India to the Caucasus; through inhospitable Scythia northward to where the Rha receives its waters amid hyperborean snows; and everywhere I have found members of this accursed sect of Christians." "Christians! are they then so numerous?" said Nilos, with growing curiosity. "They may not be so very numerous yet," he replied; "but they are everywhere, and discord and misery follow them whithersoever they go. They teach the slave to despise his master; they laugh at the worship of the gods—and though we, who are better instructed, do not need gods, the common people must have them—and everywhere they are rending father from son, wife from husband, brother from brother. Mark my words, Nilos, I am

your elder brother, and have more experience than you. You may be cajoled into that sect some day, perhaps by your servants; and if you be so foolish, you will live to rue your degrading act. These people are in league to upset society, and they will succeed, unless crushed in time. The government must some day take them in hand and put an end to them, or they will strangle the State. The only good edict Nero ever published was that against the Christians. He saw through their hypocrisy, as some of his successors will surely see again, and when the edict will go forth, you will not be spared; you will lose your property, and, perhaps, your life. You will beggar your sons and daughters; your name will become a term of reproach, instead of what it is now—a passport to respectability.” “You have certainly warned me amply,” said Nilos, who was amused by his brother’s seeming concern for him, “and if I fall a victim of my own folly, assuredly you will not be to blame. But did it never,” he continued, following up the train of thought suggested by his brother’s unconscious testimony to the progress of truth, “did it never seem to you impossible, that a religion which teaches most wonderful things about a future state of bliss, and requires its adherents to deny themselves many pleasures in this life in order to secure it, could, without the help of some great God, seduce so many people? The Christians whom I have met are not all addled creatures, who might be led astray by designing men, but well instructed, and even superior persons, who are surely able to detect any attempt at fraud or jugglery on the part of their teachers and leaders. Besides, brother,” he went on warming up almost to the degree of enthusiasm, “these Christians have a God. And, as you say, the common people need some god or other. I will answer for them that they substitute one perfect God, whom they call the Creator of all things, for a number of imperfect gods who generate or destroy one another. True, this religion treats the slave and his master alike, though not in all respects; for I can attest that my Christian slaves are more submissive, more scrupulously obedient and respectful than the others. If it sets fathers and sons apart, and breaks up families, it seems to be hurtful to society; but I am quite sure that I would not hesitate to rupture the tenderest bonds of sympathy, of affection, or of friendship, if, by

such a sacrifice, I were certain of purchasing such everlasting happiness as the Christian teachers promise." "Hypocrisy, fraud," exclaimed the brother; "Nilos, you are becoming a dreamer, a fool, so farewell."

While this dialogue was going on the slaves were waiting at a little distance, straining their ears to overhear the conversation of their masters; and when it came to a close, they stood ready to accompany the guest of Nilos to the wharf. The end of a visit unpleasant to both brothers was at hand, and as the boat pulled out to sea each felt a sort of compunction for his conduct, and regretted the irritating cause.

When at sea a few days, the Egyptian took particular notice of a young man who seemed the greater part of his time rapt in meditation. At the same hour every day, this young man would take from a little chest a roll of parchment, and after devoutly kissing it would fall to reading its contents. His singular conduct excited universal comment. He was bound for Carthage, so the captain said, but no one was able to guess the profession he followed. One evening as the ship danced merrily along under a full display of canvas, and the oarsmen found their task an easy one, the young man sat under the stern-sheets looking out upon the golden pathway which the setting sun's rays were treading in the vessel's foamy wake. A number of the sailors gathered around him and looked in the same direction, as his countenance flushed with the reflection from the water betokened absorbing interest. Naught could they see, save now and then the lissome form of a dolphin arching itself gracefully, as it leaped out of its limpid element. After a little while the sailors were joined by the Egyptian traveller. Cyprian, for he was the subject of their curiosity, was lost in contemplation of the perfections of God and the beauty of Heaven—thoughts suggested by the effulgent magnificence of the picture painted on sky and water by the hand of the Almighty. "Look," said he, as he turned around and saw the crowd about him, "look at that splendor which no painter's brush can imitate or represent; and now, behold! it is sinking out of sight. It is a vision of the future, the endless future life of beauty and of bliss, reserved by the Creator for His faithful creatures." There were present young men who had not seen much of a sailor's life, and there were old tars who had

buffeted the brine from many a dismal wreck, but none of them had ever before seen such beauty on the trackless deep. Cyprian's words were silvery, and aroused their rude natures into a poem of sympathy with the surroundings. They gazed, like himself, on the scene in speechless admiration; and as the last ray stepped behind the curtain of the west, and the lustre died from the foamy ripples, and the sea and sky united in one dull embrace of undefined color, like lovers who are wont to die together, every man there felt his spirits sinking and a desire rising in him to look upon such beauty—now too short and fleeting—and to look upon it for ever. Sighs escaped from many of them, and Cyprian read their thoughts. "The Creator, fellowmen," said he, "has made us for the enjoyment of a beauty far more perfect than this fading picture. In order to purchase the right to it for us, His Son descended from His Right Hand, took on Him our nature, and suffered death." "This is one of those impious hypocrites," thought the Egyptian; "a Christian; but I will hear him out, and then confound him." In accordance with this resolution he became doubly attentive, and repressed a sneer. Cyprian went into the history of our Divine Lord's life and public ministry. Stern faces soon relaxed. Even the Egyptian was softened, and as the young priest unfolded the terrible tale of the sufferings of Jesus at the hands of His people, tears glistened in his eyes. The life of our Lord as depicted in the Gospel narrative is without a doubt the most simply beautiful composition ever written, and none but the most diabolical haters of virtue can read the pages which record the whole-souled tenderness and overflowing sympathy with men's woes that characterized every public act of the Saviour, without having stirred up within them feelings of love and veneration for Him. In the sermon on the mount He promises a blessing to the poor, the down-trodden, and those whom the slandering tongues of men afflict with untold misery and suffering. His blessed condescension towards the bereaved widow, whose dead son He gave back alive to her aged arms, stirred the souls of the seamen to admiration; and when Cyprian related how, to gratify the desire of Mary, he raised her brother Lazarus to life, they exclaimed, "He was indeed a true friend; surely he was a god." But the repetition of the stupendous miracles which marked the career of

the Son of God, caused them to fear that one who could do such things might also be powerful to punish delinquents, and they asked if He had ever killed any sinners. "No," replied the priest, "He asked forgiveness from His Father for the very men who nailed Him to the cross." When he had concluded the ghastly story of the passion, grief was depicted on every face; but when he spoke of the resurrection they looked happy, because our Lord had overcome His enemies, and they asked where He was now to be found. Cyprian told them that He was in Heaven, and that by obeying His precepts they would assuredly one day see Him and be for ever happy in His company. Thus time sped on till the hour for changing the watch arrived, when all those about the young priest went away to their posts; not with their wonted alacrity, for they would have tarried forever listening to the wondrous tale of Divine love. The Egyptian alone remained. He at once addressed the priest. "I have only your word for these wonderful facts you relate," said he, "but I believe them to be true, for it is impossible to invent such a history." "They are true," replied Cyprian, with the tone of authority his ministry gave him. "I have them from the lips of the man who saw them; and the signs and wonders which follow the believers in the Gospel of Jesus, in accordance with His promise, prove that we speak no falsehood. Our followers," he continued, "may be found over the whole earth, and are too numerous to be deceived. I am now going to Carthage, Hippo, and other places all along the coast of Africa to visit communities of Christians who have no priests to teach them." "I have travelled much," said the Egyptian, "and I know that what you say is true; but I have always looked upon you as a band of conspirators against society. I have a brother, Nilos by name, in Alexandria, who, I believe is a Christian at heart. I did my best to keep him out of their society, but I shall write to him to inform him that I myself have become a disciple of Christ." "Blessed be the Lord," said Cyprian, with holy joy; "I once heard of Nilos through a Christian slave of his who saved my life on one occasion; her name was Zelta." Cyprian did not see the Egyptian changing color; the dim starlight hid his confusion, and only the start he gave betrayed his extraordinary emotion. He feared the slave would turn out to be Anna, a name which now burned

into his very soul, causing him deep-felt contrition and regret. Cyprian did not appear to notice his new convert's emotion, but simply asked him whether he knew Zelta. He answered that he did, but his utterance was choked. The priest respected his grief by not inquiring into its cause; but the Egyptian could no longer conceal it, and with burning cheeks related his extraordinary attack upon the virtuous Anna. The merchant then went on to recount the reproof administered by Nilos, and incidentally mentioned that Anna had once been very high in social standing. This remark, coupled with the similarity of name, suddenly raised the priest's curiosity to a high pitch. "Of what nation was Anna?" he asked expectantly. "She was from Jerusalem," replied the convert, who was too much engrossed by his own feelings to notice Cyprian's anxiety; "she was a Judean, and was sold into captivity after the fall of her native city." "Father of Mercies," exclaimed the priest, leaping up greatly agitated, "could it possibly be my cousin?" "Your cousin?" queried the Egyptian, in the greatest perplexity. "The Evangelist said I would yet hear of her," he replied half to himself, without heeding the other's interruption; "this may indeed be she." "Her prayers have procured my conversion," said the Egyptian, "for I heard her the very next morning after my crime, telling my brother that she would pray for me. I laughed at the saying then, but now,—" He was interrupted by Cyprian, who asked him to describe Anna's appearance and complexion as nearly as he was able. The description fitted so exactly his cousin that there was but little doubt left in his mind about the identity, and he resolved to write for further information as soon as his sacred duties would allow. Indeed, if his mission did not call him elsewhere, he would certainly take the earliest occasion to return to Alexandria, and settle his doubts by a personal visit.

Their further conversation on this subject was checked by the advent of half a dozen seamen, among them the captain, who was anxious to hear the wonderful things Cyprian had related to their companions a while before. The priest, though much fatigued, began his discourse over again, and the Egyptian, who was even more attentive than the others, found the history of our Lord's life and doctrine more engaging than the first time he heard it. True to his profession, the captain was

much taken with the miracles which Christ performed on the sea. "I thought," said he, "that Neptune alone could calm the winds and the waves, or walk when he wished on the surface of the billowy brine. Perhaps your Christ is related to our sea-god," he continued, in his ignorance of the nature of the Divinity. Cyprian explained that He was not; and went on to show the absurdity of worshipping a multiplicity of gods. The next and the third day the priest was kept busy instructing these poor men, whose ridiculous questions showed how little they knew of God and of the future, or even of their own dignity; and before reaching the coast of Sicily he had the happiness of baptizing the whole boat's crew.

It consisted of men from various parts of the world, who carried their faith with them and spread it to the best of their ability, each in his own family and district.

It would, in one sense, be a tedious task to follow our Cyprian on his long and extended mission through the then known parts of the African continent; though in another sense, it would be for the devout Christian, very interesting. Let it suffice, therefore, to say that he travelled from objective points, such as Carthage, Hippo, Cartenna, and Tingis, into the interior, wherever he heard that a community of Christians resided. Some of these colonies had their bishop and priests, and others, having lost both through persecution, were left to mourn and pray for an occasional visitation of some Apostolic laborer.

Finally he was sent by the Bishop of Carthage to Rome with instructions to consult the successor of St. Peter on important points of church discipline. While he was on this journey a second terrible persecution was inaugurated against Christianity by the Roman Emperor who succeeded the mild and tolerant Titus. On account of adverse winds, the usual trip of six or seven days was prolonged into as many weeks, and when Cyprian arrived at the port of Ostia, the first news that he heard was of this dreadful persecution. He pushed on, however, to Rome and proceeded to look for the Bishop of the Eternal City, in order to carry out his commission. It was no easy matter, as the Christians were once more compelled to hide from the light of day, and to keep secret the place of assembly and the abodes of the clergy.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE BIRD ENSNARED.

THE reader must now transport himself back to the scene of the struggle between the Jew and Servius, where he will see the horsemen who rode up just as Joras fell, taking him roughly between them and placing manacles upon his arms and a chain about his feet. Besides, he will see Servius wiping his sword, carefully putting it up, and then advancing towards the prostrate Irene, whom he raises gently from the roadside. She is not in possession of her senses, for she looks about her vacantly, and addresses no questions to her captor. Yet she is able to walk slowly by his side, supported by his arm, as he leaves the scene of his terrible struggle. They had walked, perhaps, half a mile, when three muffled figures suddenly appeared, emerging from a doorway of an unfinished temple, before which stood several long poles and scaffolding, which gave it the appearance of a vast ship on the stocks. As Servius came in sight of them, he challenged them and was answered in a friendly tone. They were slaves to Pontia, who bade them assemble at that particular spot, and await what instructions the abductor of Irene would be pleased to give them. He at once transferred his charge to them, and followed them at a little distance. It was only when they arrived at Pontia's mansion that Irene rallied sufficiently to question her unknown guardians. "Where am I," she asked, recognizing Servius, "and where is that Jew?" "I saved you from him," answered the soldier, "because I am your lover's friend. You are too weak to hear how it was now, but go with these friends of mine until to-morrow, and I shall come and tell you all." "I thank you from my heart," said Irene, "but whose house is this? I think I know it." "Pontia's,"

replied one of the slaves laconically, as he proceeded to inform the inmates of the girl's arrival. "Thank God," she murmured fervently, looking after Servius, who was limping away; "I have a friend in Pontia, at all events." At the same moment Pontia appeared, and received her former tutor with every mark of sincere affection, seated her in a comfortable chair, declared herself to be dying to know the cause of her suffering, and sympathetically expressed a wish to share her woes.

Is all that glitters gold? Are the demonstrative greetings or leave takings that we witness to-day, in society, more hollow, false and treacherous than Pontia's, or less? "You shall remain here to-night and to-morrow, my dear," said this woman with emphatic unction, when Irene had related the little she knew of the circumstances of her capture; "you must remain with me until you are quite over your fright—truly you look like a corpse." "I was fortunate in meeting with your friend, dearest Pontia," said Irene, interjecting the words between the voluble sentences of the pagan lady. "Only a recent acquaintance" replied Pontia, with a rapid glance at her companion that betrayed her desire of avoiding further reference to Servius. "But," she went on, changing the subject, "how glad I am that no stranger found you, under such peculiar circumstances; it would look so ill, if the fame of it spread." "O, Pontia," sighed Irene, who became first scarlet and then ghastly pale again. She knew what the world could say, and was in the habit of saying; and that it would condemn her unjustly as an associate of ruffians, if the events of the last few hours became public. She knew this as well as Pontia; and she felt any reference to the subject as a slap in the face. She would not recall to the mind of a sufferer, things which would intensify her pain. But Pontia was a pagan, to whom charity and its daughter politeness were alike strangers. So thought Irene, who checked the reproach which rose to her lips. "Dear me," continued Pontia, taking no notice apparently of the effect of her venomous thrust, "how awful the times are becoming. Every day we hear of murders, and *such* murders! Mothers kill their own babes, children their parents, wives their husbands. Outrage and violent oppression of weak women are nightly occurrences; and so frequent are the deaths from poison, which lurks in the elegant dishes or choice wines of

the treacherous host, that one is afraid to accept a friend's invitation to dinner." And Pontia shook her beautiful head with a slow regretful motion, while copious tears started conveniently to her eyes. "Society will soon melt away under such horrors," said Irene. "You speak the truth," the murderess went on. "The State will fall, and we shall all become the prey of the barbarians if such things go on. Our poets tell us so, and it must be so. All the great athletes in the circus are aliens, as no Roman youth can be found strong enough to contend for the prizes. The same is true of the gladiators. What would we ever do for games, if we had not those Jews and Thracians, and all those other savages to fall back upon?" and her eye kindled with satisfaction. "But I forgot," said she, as she noticed her friend shrink at the mention of those sanguinary spectacles. "I forgot that you did not appreciate the games. However, my dearest Irene, we are not going to quarrel about tastes; but for my part, I would die in a month, if there were no games to distract me." "I suppose I would like them, too," said Irene with a shudder, as the result of such a possibility presented itself to her mind, "if I had been brought up among them. But, gracious lady, are they not a part and a result of what you were just now deploring? If the taking of life is lawful in the circus, it is lawful in the street and on the domestic hearth; and when such things are tolerated by our rulers, is it any wonder that murder and violence are unchecked abroad?" "Well, well," replied Pontia, evasively, stifling the voice of her almost strangled conscience, which quickened for an instant at the sound of truth, "citizens ought to be better protected by our Emperors against the lawless hands of barbarians. But, as I was saying, my dear, immorality is rampant." This was not very consecutive; but it is hard to be natural under a mask. However, she proceeded like a genuine moralist, to inveigh against the wickedness of those in high standing. "High-born ladies," said she, with a virtuous scowl, "with little or no disguise sell their virtue to human brutes who are victorious in the contests at the circus; mothers destroy their infants in most extraordinary ways, and wives desert their husbands. Why, even the Emperor's wife was discovered in a secret amour with a low vagabond of the Suburra Clamosa.* Then look at the impudence of the manu-

*A low street near the Forum.

mitted slaves, those low fellows from every part of the world who come to Rome to make a fortune. They get money, and know how to keep it. They become wealthy by lending their earnings and their stealings to business men and senators at enormous rates of interest. And when their former masters become bankrupt through rioting and gambling, these men patronize them; drive about in chariots, and have their ugly statues set up in the Forum. It is detestable. Look at Trigillinus and Nymphidius: they dictated Nero's policy! They were his freedmen, and yet they ruled the Roman Empire. And what outrages they perpetrated! I would not venture beyond my own door-step at night, for fear of assassins—or worse; I would not, I assure you, dearest Irene. How happy I am that you are safe with me to-night."

This terrible, but veracious picture of Roman indecency and degradation was sketched with the utmost rapidity by one who, as the reader is aware, knew a great deal more about such facts than she ought; and as she gave it the final touches, she threw her arms around the neck of her companion and repeatedly kissed her. Irene, when she succeeded in extricating herself from the embrace of Pontia, remarked that if Christianity were adopted as the religion of the commonwealth, such horrid evils would soon disappear. "Gracious lady," said the ingenuous guest, "you are virtuous above your class, and in spite of a religion which fosters the very vices you complain of. If you were but a Christian, you would be so happy." "Ah! but you exalt the slave to the level of freemen, my dear, and I could never stand that; still, as you say, I might be happy, if—but here is the lunch ready, and you need it so much; come dearest." The two women, when standing, were of a height, and both so beautiful that they might be mistaken by a pagan artist for two of the Graces, who had for a season parted company with their third celestial companion. They entered a little dining apartment—their heads close together, and their arms twined around each other's waist. It was not the room in which Julius was to dine the next evening, but one on the opposite side of the hall. A few delicacies were served on golden plates, and the delicious Maronean and Falernian wines sparkled in crystal goblets. "Alas," said Pontia, laying down a half emptied glass and gazing about with well-feigned sorrow, first at the

costly but unchaste frescoes on the walls then at the nude statues of Persepolis marble standing upon Parian pedestals of exquisite workmanship, and finally dropping her eyes to the mosaic floor, "the last time I supped here, I had with me a lover whose heart is still for ever, and whose shade is perhaps wandering along the Stygian shore, waiting for some friend to give his body funeral honors." A sigh followed this declaration, and after a pause this further information for Irene: "Many a night, he reclined where you now sit—before the legions went to Palestine—and sipped the rosy wine, and talked fondly of the future happy day of our marriage. O, Julius," she repeated, placing her hands on her breast, and looking steadily at her guest, "if you were here now to join us, and sing for me while I played the lute; but—O, Irene! Are you unwell, my dear? Slaves! Here quickly."

Irene had fainted. A strange feeling had seized upon her limbs—a sort of numbness, and had just reached her head which began to burn and swim as the name of Julius was mentioned. She screamed and clutched at the table, but in a moment her eyes were fixed in a stare and she lost consciousness. "The poison worked sooner than I had expected," said Pontia to her trustworthy slave, when Irene was carried into another room. "What that rough soldier said concerning the love affair between Julius and this minx, was only too true. I found out her secret in my own way. But she is in my power now; and if Julius will not accept my hand, by the immortal gods! his corpse shall float after hers down the yellow Tiber to the sea." The poison prepared by the murderous Pontia was one that operated gradually. It induced sleep, but slowly and imperceptibly; and in a few days death resulted, usually without arousing suspicion. It was the drug with which she had got rid of her sister. Owing to Irene's weakness, its action was hastened; and whereas Pontia had not intended the draught, which she so dexterously mixed with her victim's wine, to act before the following morning, its first effects were visible within an hour. Days and days passed and Irene still slumbered. Julius had supped in the next room, and had afterwards gone off to Gaul. Tullius had been sent for and made happy by the advances of Pontia, and finally married the murderess—still Irene woke not. Now and then food was given her, which she partook of without giving any sign of consciousness—she was in a trance.

When Pontia was in the first moments of her disappointment and rage at the conduct of Julius, she rushed into the apartment where Irene was lying, fully resolved to pierce her heart with a poniard. "You," she shrieked, brandishing the blade about the corpse-like form and features of the sleeping maiden. "you it is who have robbed me of my Julius." But just at that instant, Irene turned her head and smiled—a faint sweet smile—and uttered some words in the Greek tongue, which the murderess did not understand; and Pontia's arm was unnerved. She stood transfixed with horror. Before her she seemed to see the cold face of the sister whom she had murdered, wearing the same smile that sat upon it when she left this fratricidal world. The living ulcer of Pontia's corroding conscience broke out afresh, when she had thought it healed, and its stench pervaded and sickened her guilty soul. "Murderess," it seemed to say to her, "shed no more innocent blood; remember your past crimes." The dagger fell from her hand upon the floor and, screaming "I am going mad, I am mad," she ran from the room and from the house into the garden where, safe from the eyes of the household, she threw herself on the long grass and wept—bitter but fruitless tears.

A month went by during which Irene remained in her comatose condition, when a messenger from the Clementine family called on Pontia, and asked whether she knew anything of the lady. The murderess was thrown utterly off her guard; and not knowing what else to say, asked the visitor if he wished to take her friend away from under her roof, before she was quite recovered. He explained that it would be better to have her among those of her own Faith, so that in case of fatal consequences she would be looked after as Christians wished to be, at the hour of death. "How did you discover—I mean suspect that Irene was with me?" asked Pontia falteringly of her unexpected and unwelcome visitor. "By the merest accident," answered the visitor. "We have been looking for her above a month; and I confess, it surprised me that you, her old friend, did not let us know what had happened to her before this." Pontia's facility for lying furnished her with a reply to this unanswerable rebuke. "I wrote a letter," said she, without hesitation and seemingly heedless of the fact that her visitor knew she was fabricating, "I wrote it and had not the heart to

send it to you, as I felt it would break so many hearts:—a sob. She came here under such suspicious circumstances—” She could proceed no further, but looked ruefully at the ground as the obedient tears started to her eyes. Clement was angry; but he controlled his temper, and said: “Her character is stainless; you need make no further apology. I shall hasten to remove her to our home.” “If you think it is safe to do so, you are free to remove her at any moment,” said Pontia, drying her tears; “but,” she proceeded, “you must not let my husband know that she has been here: he will return at night.”

Pontia did not know, could not guess, how her great secret was betrayed, though she racked her brains perpetually. One of the slaves had done it she was certain; but which one? To question them would be useless. This is how it leaked out. The slave who was commissioned to prepare the poisoned draught for Irene, was one in whom Pontia reposed the utmost confidence. She was an old domestic, never manumitted, but never seemingly desirous of such an honor. She had nursed her mistress, and was her constant and faithful attendant, whenever she went abroad. If Pontia’s wicked life was an open book to her, it mattered little, so long as the rest of the world could prove nothing evil against that estimable lady. But slaves must have particular friendships as well as their owners; and it so fell out—it is always so, unluckily for the wicked—that this old slave’s *confidante* was a young slave, who had recently been admitted to Baptism. Now when Pontia saw that the poison given to Irene failed to act promptly, she quarrelled with her old favorite, and beat her severely. Forthwith the hag hastened to the cellar and imbibed wine, the oldest and strongest there was, until she felt consoled for the temporary loss of her mistress’s favor. In her drunken garrulity she sent for her *confidante*, and abused her and the mistress by turns; and among other things revealed to the horrified novice was the awful crime—partially carried out—against Irene. Without loss of time the young slave made known the facts to Clement, who, dissembling his knowledge of the attempted murder, approached Pontia in the manner related above.

The visitor had been but a few hours gone when he returned to Pontia’s palace with four servants bearing a kind of palan-

quin on their shoulders. As they approached they perceived that some trouble had occurred, and not knowing what it might be, they hurried on, fearing some ill might befall Irene. A crowd of boys and men, and a few women, stood about the vestibule and on the steps, and would have forced their way into the house but for the efforts of a dozen strong slaves, who, armed with clubs and whips, kept guard against the unwarranted invasion. Within, occasional shrieks, clearly those of a female, were heard at intervals: they were hysterical shrieks accompanied by the loud angry words of a man. It was an awkward situation, and Clement stood perplexed, not knowing how to face it. But of one thing he was sure: that the female voice he heard screaming was not Irene's. After a few moments' reflexion, however, he made up his mind, and advancing through the crowd into the porch, accosted the slave who seemed to be in command of the others. "I have come," he said, "to take away, with the lady Pontia's permission, my friend Irene who is unwell; perhaps you are aware of our arrangement? I trust there will be no objection to my entrance," he continued, a little sternly. He had resolved to call for the nearest quæstor and force an entrance if the slave's answer were in the negative. But he was saved the trouble. The slave, who knew him, called him aside and was about to explain to him something of the situation, when a courier rode up to the house and shouted "a letter for the lady Pontia." The letter was taken by a slave who disappeared with it in a moment. Meanwhile Clement was informed that Tullius, who was not to be home before nightfall, had arrived rather unexpectedly and surprised his wife sipping wine with a former rival. This caused the uproar.

Suddenly the quarreling ceased, and the slave who had taken the letter from the courier up to his mistress' apartment returned to learn the nature of the anxious Clement's message. The message was verbal, and the slave departed. When he approached Pontia's room the second time, a great change had come over both her and Tullius. She wore a terrified look and he was blanched, as if by a sudden fright. He was leaning against the wall, trembling, and firmly grasping the hilt of his sword, in order to control the nervous twitching of his fingers. She was sitting on a kind of sofa, her cheeks deathly pale and tear-

stained, her hair hanging loosely about her face and shoulders ; and her left hand (which held a letter), trembled so violently as to threaten, if such a thing were possible, to go to pieces. The slave stopped, and listened. "He is dead now," said Pontia to her husband, "and there is no further need of keeping the woman here. I only feared she would find out that he was still alive. She should have died two weeks ago, but the dose was not strong enough and she will wake up sooner or later." "Yes," replied Tullius, "your object is gained, now that Julius is murdered ; but what have I gained ? By Hercules ! by all Olympus ! if you had told me a month ago that woman was here, you would have needed no draughts nor sluggish poisons to be rid of her. But as in all the rest, in this too you have betrayed me," and he hissed the last words between his teeth. "You love Irene, I see it plainly," said Pontia, in a low voice. "And you, monster, you are jealous of her, and you love Julius still," replied the husband. "It is of no use discussing the matter further," said Pontia ; "we have had enough of that, and our quarrel is, I fear, known to the whole neighborhood. But this—and she held up the letter—this is the sore work. We have hired an assassin, and who is he ? His letter says he has done the work, but how do we know whether he will keep the secret ? A terrible fear sweeps over me, and tells me we are betrayed." "I trembled the moment I saw the letter," said Tullius ; "burn it at once. I might have known," said he, then, distraught, "that a murderess would not be a faithful wife ;" then turning to her, "you have dragged me into this shameful and dangerous business, the curse of the Furies betide you, and you——" The slave here stepped from his place of concealment into the room and requested Pontia to receive his message. She tossed to her husband Servius' letter, the letter which he had sent off the very day on which he threw Julius over the precipice. Then she left the room and closed the door. Of course, there could be but one answer for Clement ; but Pontia begged to be excused from appearing, as she had become suddenly indisposed.

And now a series of surprises were preparing for all concerned. When Pontia's servants went to Irene's room, she was no longer asleep, but preparing to leave it. They stared at her speechless, unable to answer her salutation. She could not un-

derstand the cause of their fright, as they rushed away to tell their mistress ; and would have followed them if not checked by Clement, who now appeared with his train. He was as delighted to see her revived, as Pontia was dejected, and Tullius was too much oppressed with the dread of punishment for his criminal complicity in the murder of Julius, to be much affected either way. Irene was very weak and very pale, but otherwise well enough and quite prepared to go back to her old home, though she was unable to interpret the mystery that hung over her departure from her friend's palace. "Come quickly," said Clement, who perceived her perplexity, "when at home you will learn all." Her friend Pontia made no attempt to see her before she left, probably because her impudence had reached its limit, and she could not look her victim in the face.

Great was the rejoicing in the Clementine family when Irene arrived, not as they had been expecting to see her, unconscious—perhaps dying—but well, and able to converse with them as formerly. Her presence was like the balmy spring sunshine, when the bleak wintry winds are at rest. In a few days the roses returned to her cheeks, and she was able to hear unmoved, the tale of the wrong inflicted upon her by the treacherous friend. "And you tell me it is more than a month since the Triumph : coming from other lips I could not believe it," said Irene. To her the period of the trance seemed like a long night, during which strange and weird visions and a few beautiful dreams flitted through her mind. But they left only a faint impression. She could not recollect any scene connectedly ; yet she remembered that once she saw a man in prison. It was Julius. With him was a priest whom she was unable to recognize, though she longed to know him. She was persuaded that if she did not find out who he was, some dreadful mishap would befall ; and accordingly she strove in every way to acquire the needful knowledge, but to no purpose. Julius could not inform her, nor could he save her from the impending evil. He seemed even indifferent to her—a fact which added to her sufferings. The end came at last. She was shut up in a dungeon while some gawsome death was preparing for her. It was unlike any other torture ever before employed. But the intolerable part of her burden consisted in this, she could

not tell who her executioners were, nor why they wished to make away with her. At length she saw them. They forced her to drink something nauseous, when all at once a ringing noise arose in her head, and continued growing in volume and intensity until she thought whole armies were treading with martial pace through her brain. She awoke and looked about : it was past noon. "How long I have slept," she thought, and at once arose, somewhat ashamed of her slothfulness. "It was a long sleep," remarked Clement, when she had finished her relation of the worrying dream, and the circumstances of her waking, "a very long sleep, and one from which it is providential you ever awoke."

The noise which woke Irene from her long and critical slumber, and that took such a hideous form in her dream, arose from the quarrel between the young people who had not yet completed their honeymoon. With such a lady as Pontia—and she was a type of the pagan Roman ladies of that day—marriage was by no means the death knell of flirtation. Her unhallowed desire was as vigorous and promiscuous as ever ; and when detected in its pursuit by her husband, she told him plainly that he should look for no exclusive right to her heart. "You have certain rights over my property," said she defiantly, "but not over my heart. I will give that to whom I will, and just because I will." Tullius might divorce her ; but would he succeed better in another marriage ? He knew that he was powerless. And she knew it. But what brought him home so unexpectedly on this unlucky day ? Were his suspicions aroused by certain things that he saw ; or did some of the slaves maliciously betray the secret of their scandalous mistress ? Perhaps his return was wholly accidental ; but however it was, the precipitate flight of his rival through a window, alone prevented a murder in the faithless wife's apartments. Tullius rushed madly about through the house, and into the room where Irene was kept. He recognized her immediately, and called loudly on his wife (who followed him about screaming and entreating), to explain how she came to be there. Whatever she answered, he became almost frantic, furious though he was before. "I could kill her," he roared, brandishing his sword aloft ; "yet I have not the courage to do it." In a moment his love for her—the only woman he ever truly

loved—was rekindled in his heart, and falling on his knees at her bedside, he sobbed, "O Irene, Irene, you are virtuous, you are chaste, but your virtue has been my ruin—has driven me to marry a harridan." "O Tullius," wailed the hysterical Pontia, "do not call me by such names in presence of my slaves." Her husband sprang up fiercely. "No, no," he shouted, "I may be wronged, made a laughing stock of before your household, and I can have no satisfaction. But I shall have it, by the eternal fires!" he added, lowering his voice ominously. "I know your paramour and I will kill him." It was at this stage of the quarrel that the slave bearing the letter from Servius approached. The reader already knows what followed.

In a few weeks Irene was as busy as ever at her former occupations. Many a thing had happened during the month of her trance that interested or amused her. But nothing pleased her so well, as to hear that prayers had been offered up every day for her, from her disappearance until she was discovered; for she attributed to their efficacy her rescue from the cruel hands of Pontia. When she was told that a soldier had once inquired very anxiously for her, she concluded from the description given by the servant to whom he had addressed his inquiries, that it must have been Servius. Who else could it be? She trembled as she thought of him. Was he in the plot against her life? He seemed to have acted a most friendly part, and she had barely thanked him. He was to have called next day at Pontia's house. Had he done so? Thoughts such as these worried her for a time, but Pontia's treachery haunted her unceasingly. "How dreadful," said she, addressing the family one evening, when the events of that sorrowful month were made the subject of conversation:—"The Apostle Paul could not have been more outspoken in condemnation of vice than Pontia." And she recounted the terrible indictment drawn up against Roman society by the murderess. "I believed her to be an exception," Irene continued, "a rare, rare exception—as there must be some—and I proposed to her the charms of Christian life. She turned away from me and changed the subject." "Perhaps," said some one, "she may yet receive the gift of faith and repentance for her crimes. God's mercy," said the Elder Clement, "knows no limits."



CHAPTER XXII.

THE PLAGUE.

"The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap ;
The herdsman who climbed with his goats up the steep,
The beggar who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread."

F all the virtues which the early Christians practised, none exerted such lasting influence as their unselfishness and charity. Full of suspicion, the pagans would not believe in the sincerity of Christian faith and hope, honesty and chastity ; but they could not, if they would, close their eyes to the heroic sacrifices made by these down-trodden people in the cause of suffering humanity. Paganism left the foundling and the sick or deformed child to perish, and the old or infirm to die by the roadside ; while Christianity fostered the one and housed the other, without inquiring whether the victim was an infidel or a disciple of the cross. With their own hands they tended the sick ; with their own substance they fed them. This was superhuman : it was charity. All recognized the facts. Some were drawn by them into the Church ; others were enraged by them against it.

One day the sun was looking down upon the parched fields, and the dusty streets of the city—looking one of his fiercest looks—a look that meant vengeance and death. A few vegetable vendors and wine peddlars lagged along the streets, shouting out their wares to attract the attention of the sleeping city, and hollowing untranslatable Latin at their sweating mules, which with hanging heads and drooping ears waddled along from one side of the road to the other, evidently unwilling to make the least unnecessary exertion. It was on the Palatine, and among the poorest of Rome's poor that the first mule fell. He was beaten, of course, but this would not cure

him. In a few minutes he died. A crowd gathered about, mostly boys, some of whom facetiously prodded the carcase, and began to make fun of its owner, when lo ! he too fell, as they all said sunstruck ; and having turned black, in a few minutes breathed his last. Then a boy fell ; and his mother who was calling to him from an open doorway rushed out to to pick up the sick child, fell beside him, became black like him, and like the pedlar, and like the other boys, three of whom now lay in the road, and died. The whole neighborhood was by this time aroused, and while some ran in one direction to secure medical aid, others ran for the sediles to have the now corrupting corpses removed, and others again locked themselves in their houses, and closed the windows to keep out the horrible stench. No one dared to render assistance to the dying. "What is the disease ?" people asked in whispers ; for when real dread takes hold of man, he fears the sound of his own voice. "What is it," they asked, and called on their gods to defend them. Some gave it one name, others another ; but before the first physician who had answered the summons, dropped dead beside the child he came to relieve, he pronounced the disease the plague !

And the plague it was surely. The plague that struck down the beast of burden, as it fed at the stall or toiled in the street ; the plague that tainted the cattle as they grazed in the browned meadows, or lowed for water in the dried up brooks ; the plague that discoloured the transparent flesh of the new born babe and turned its laughing eyes to hideous ulcers, under the very gaze of its frantic but powerless mother ; the plague that crept into the bridal chamber and changed the young bride to a grinning skull with carous teeth, from which the gums had dropped away ; the plague which stretched the brawny breadwinner on the cold earth, a blackened mass of fetid and worm-eaten rottenness ; the plague that brought down the proud senator to the level of the slave, the Pontifex Maximus or High Priest to that of his victim—alike a fever-breeding, soul-sickening nameless heap of putrefaction ; the plague that strewed the streets and the Forum, the temple and the hearth, the hall, the garden, the bridge, the tent, the field with piles of unburied corpses, from which the very carrion birds flew away with loathing ; the plague, that in fine turned into a vast solitude

the city of cities, and hushed its many-voiced hills into a silence like that of the sealed and vaulted tomb.

Then it was that the Christians heaped coals of fire on the heads of their persecutors. The spirit of our Lord's command to pray for one's enemies—was never better illustrated than during this awful visitation. When fathers abandoned wives and children, and betook themselves to the country; and when mothers, forgetting their natural instincts, left their young to perish while they fled from the destroyer, Christian priests and Christian maidens went about relieving distress, alleviating pain, caring for the helpless sick, and burying, as best they could, the forgotten victims of the direful scourge. Ah, how many a saint, whose name is not emblazoned on calendars, nor venerated at altars where incense rises in hallowed clouds; whose praises are not sounded in anthems, nor spoken in panegyrics abounding in wreaths of imagery—spent his strength amid the nauseating exhalations of the sick room, or the mephitic vapors of the charnel house. How many a priest poured the saving waters of Baptism on the forehead of the dying man whom his benevolent labors convinced of the Divinity of his faith! How many a minister of God bore the dead on his shoulders to a place of burial, then fell fever-smitten beside the grave, and gave up his pure soul, far from his friends, with none to shed a tear, nor smoothe by a kind word or look his lone passage into eternity!

Who is your bloated scoffer that bids us enjoy life, and tells us that he neither believes in nor hopes for a future state? Generally he who has all he wants, and is as yet a stranger to disease. He is your purse-proud agnostic, your epicurean infidel who wallows in the mire of his passions, and has no heart, no feeling for his brother who is down. Perhaps he has never seen misery. Let him then go; if he will, into a fever or plague smitten locality. Let him enter the single little room, dirty and squalid, where lies on a mat stretched upon the floor the father of a family, shouting, moaning, cursing, perhaps laughing—an idiotic laugh—in his delirious exaltation, as the large beads of the death moisture trickle adown his sallow, sunken features into his gnarled and frowzy beard. Let him then turn to the children, the innocent children, too young, alas, to know what sorrow is. Listen to their heavy breath-

ing ; hush ! One calls. Approach him ; he is dying. His little face is pinched, his eyes glazed, his nostrils distended. He is trying to breathe ; he wants air. His little wasted hands are wandering over the tattered garments that cover him. He makes to turn his head—he gasps, listen—mamma ! The first word he learned to utter was his last. It is dark in this room ; let us take care where we tread, as there is another corpse lying about here somewhere. Here it is, scarcely cold ; yet the odor is unpleasant ; the air all about is impregnated with the heavy smell. One look more before we leave, a quick glance. Yes, that is the mother in the corner. She is not frantic with grief, you say ; she is quite calm, and sways from side to side on the wretched broken chair. She has been for weeks here alone, nursing the sick ones—young and old alike. She has had no sleep all that time ; and her eyelids are thick and red, and she hums and talks by turns, to herself—she is unconscious of all about her. Her reason is flagging, as well as her senses, and perhaps she is already insane. Who knows where insanity begins ? Poverty, sickness, insanity, death ! What monsters, that some must be familiar with ! Show this picture of horrors—and they often happen without any fault of those who suffer from them—show this picture in all its cruel vividness of real coloring to your infidels, and bid them test their crude, savage theories in its presence. If they are men and have hearts, they must feel how shallow are their sceptical fancies that can neither give a reason for the existence of pain and sorrow, nor afford the innocent sufferer any consolation whatever. Modern infidelity, which is only adoration of self, is, in presence of human suffering, just what paganism was. It is boastful, cowardly, heartless, inconsistent. The religion of Christ is never seen to advantage, except when, like her Divine founder, she is going about doing good, healing the sick, feeding and clothing the poor, in a word, stooping to alleviate every form of human woe. Christian morality and doctrine too often offend the sentiments and inclinations of worldly men, who are in the enjoyment of health and wealth ; but what consolation does not the doctrine that there is to come a life of endless bliss bought by the Man-God bestow on the majority of the human race—the toilers, the weak, and the needy ! The scandal of the few, the proud and wealthy few, is balm for the

hurts, food for the hunger, and drink for the thirst, of the countless millions of the world's despised poor.

During the dreadful plague that swept the inhabitants of Rome from the palaces of the rich and the hovels of the poor into the same unburied heap, Irene went about like an angel of hope, ministering to the wants of those who were forsaken by their dearest relatives and nearest of kin. Many a departing soul breathed a prayer to the God whom they learned through her to adore, asking a blessing on her charity ; but, alas, she also heard from dying lips, many an imprecation against false friends and against the chastening Hand that wielded the awful scourge. Often she went into stately mansions through open and unguarded doors, and passing over the corpses of the slaves, found the rich owner breathing his last on the floor. In one instance, the victim had fallen from the bed and lain there helpless as an infant. He had called for help—she heard him from the street—but the slaves, whom he had promised their freedom and much wealth besides, if they would remain and help him, were dead, and lying yonder in the porch. To moisten with a drop of water the cracked and bleeding lips was all the good Irene could do for him ; and a look of gratitude from the sightless eyes which he turned towards her, was her only earthly recompense. In another case, the floors of the house were of precious marble and life-like frescos decked the walls and ceiling, from which hung golden lamps—the light still burning, through the hour was noon. Furniture the costliest, adorned every room, and statuary of bronze and of marble smiled or frowned in every corner. Everything was still within, not a single sound broke the sepulchral solitude. Three slaves lay dead between the porch and the atrium, two more near the lord's bedchamber. His right hand clutched a bag of gold and silver coins, some of which lay about him on the floor where he fell. In another part of the house lay the mistress on her left side, both of her hands pressing to her breast a small statue, one of her household gods. From her ears large pieces of flesh were torn away by some one who, perhaps while she was yet alive, stole the precious eardrops ; and several of her fingers lay about the floor, evidently cut off by the same thief, in his effort to secure her rings. In the kitchen, a servant, a stout middle aged female, lay dead upon the hearth. The fire was

extinct, only a few live embers remaining : their latest fuel was the head and right arm of her who had fallen helplessly upon them. Irene passed through the rooms of this house in search of anyone who might still be alive ; she found no one. She turned to leave, and as she passed out into the street, she noticed that the left hand of one of the corpses she had passed in the porch, clutched a brilliant. She stooped and looked more closely, and saw a piece of flesh clinging to it. This was the robber who had enjoyed his booty only a few steps beyond the scene of his crime. Perhaps he was a slave who had been harshly treated by his mistress, and sought some redress in this cowardly way ; perhaps on the contrary, he had been well treated ; but avarice stifled generosity or gratitude. It may be, he was a stranger, one of the many who, inflamed with the rich wine they took undisturbed from choicest cellars, went about regardless of consequences, plundering the effects of defenceless proprietors. Such as he might be seen in every street, dying or dead, but even in death holding fast his stolen property ; gold or silver, precious stones or precious garments, whatever in a word, he hoped to escape with or turn to advantage.

During one of these sad visitations, Irene entered a house in which she heard loud wailing. She did not advert to its locality, nor recognise the enormous vases which graced the entrance. It was as if she had never before been here. Yet this was the scene of many a plot and many a crime ; of many a debauch and many an intrigue. Need we tell the reader, Irene stood once more under Pontia's roof ? Yes, dear reader, this bold, bad woman was among the victims of the pestilence. On its first appearance, several of her slaves were taken ill and died off suddenly, but she was spared and most of her household. She was an infidel, but she placed her house and property, as a safeguard, under the protection of Apollo. She saw the ravages of the epidemic, and grew hardened as they spread. Though she laughed—it was the fashion—at the superstitions of her day, danger moved her to moderate the smile. She had the satisfaction of hearing of the death of all her rivals save one ; and as she one day risked a drive through the city, she was gratified beyond all expectation by seeing this last rival's corpse in the street and driving over it. But this was to be the term of her triumph. Her favorite slave was first cut off, at a time when

she felt confident her house was safe from further attack. Then her paramour, whom she had a month before induced with bribes to murder her husband, the unfortunate Tullius, fell at her feet as he came to announce the success of his horrible undertaking. He had assassinated Tullius in the public baths, and escaped to tell the tale—and perish miserably. Pontia would have wished to throw herself on the body and weep, but the noisome stench repulsed her. She sickened and went to her room. She called for her servants, but they ran from the infected mansion, each carrying away some article of value. Some escaped with their booty, others fell victims to the malady, even before they reached the doorway. One slave alone remained alive about the premises, the one whom Pontia had stabbed with a poniard. She was a Christian, and the one who had made known the murderous designs of her mistress on Irene. Her wound had recently reopened and she lay sick in a distant and dismal outhouse. She heard the cries of her mistress for help, and, weak as she was, arose and went to her room. The unfortunate Pontia shrieked when she saw the woman she had so cruelly wronged, and shrunk back to the farthest part of the bed. "O do not murder me," she cried imploringly, as her eyes met those of the slave; "they have all gone from me, and I am alone, dying. Do not murder me, and I will free you, good Serva; I shall make you wealthy if you will not kill me." It was a sad sight, to see the proud and powerful Pontia, cowering before the slave she had stabbed, and with outstretched arms entreating her to pardon and forget the past. The slave burst into a passion of tears; for the plight of her unfortunate mistress excited her tenderest sympathy. "Oh! no, my mistress," she exclaimed with passionate emphasis, as soon as she could recover her speech, "I am weak and sick, but you own whatever service I can perform. Oh! how could you believe me such a wretch as to kill you?" For many weeks Pontia suffered, not from the plague, but from a malignant fever, and her sole attendant was the faithful Christian Serva. Often the wretched woman cried out for death to release her from pain, and besought the slave to kill her or furnish her with the means of killing herself. She was in despair. Irene found her in one of these sad fits of despondency and recognizing her, approached softly and with tender words sought to

assuage her suffering. For a long time the murderess did not know who was speaking to her ; but when the sweet face of Irene came back to her through the thick clouds which over-spread her failing memory, she fainted away with a scream. That face brought her a new agony ; and in the awful depth of her despairing remorse, she found a still deeper depth, when the remembrance of her cowardly attack on Irene now forced itself upon her. " You come to laugh at me in my dying moments," she cried when she recovered partial consciousness. " Could you not let me die alone, in peace." " Not in peace, either," she continued, addressing Irene, but without daring to look at her, " not in peace, but in my own misery, in my own despair. Leave me, leave me ; you look like my sister who is ever haunting me. I killed her," she went on, her nervousness increasing at every word, " I poisoned her, I killed Julius, and Tullius, and my babes ; and now they are all coming back to grin at me with their horrid, toothless, eyeless faces. Leave them to me and myself, Irene ; away, leave me." As she said this she fell back on her pillow exhausted. Had Irene been a vindictive woman, what pleasure would not such a scene afford her ! but she was not. She remained at the bedside of the wretched Pontia, and strove to convert her to a change of heart, but all to no purpose. Pontia, however, saw that she had nothing to fear from the woman whom she once wished to make away with, and at lucid intervals during her delirium, she would beg her forgiveness. But she would not listen to a word about Christianity, nor call upon God to pardon her. Instead, she implored them to offer a pagan sacrifice for her. Her end was fast approaching, and she wished to impart some secret to Irene before she should die. The feeling grew upon her, as she neared eternity—pagan though she was—that reparation for her crime was required. " I cannot undo all my wickedness," she said, as she seized Irene's hand, " but I must make you"—she faltered ; her eyes were fixed and the black hue of the fever was discoloring her fair but wasted brow. With a great effort she cleared her throat and proceeded, " I cannot see you Irene, but I want to tell you how I wronged you. Julius"—Irene started : What mystery was this ? " I hear you, Pontia, go on." " Julius, your Julius did not die in Palestine ; Servius deceived you. Do you hear ?" gasped the

dying murderess. "I do," replied Irene faintly; she was hardly able to stand, but she struggled with her feelings, and bore up, "I hear." "My husband hated Julius, his rival for my hand, and he employed Servius to kill him in the camp in Gaul." Her voice grew faint and husky, and her breath came quick and heavy. She went on, her grip tightening on the hand of Irene, "he threw him down into—a—rocky—steep—" Irene heard no more, she fell fainting to the floor. The murderess lay a few moments breathless; then, with a piercing shriek, which re-echoed through every room in the house, she leaped up, flung her hands high in the air, and fell out of the bed a corpse upon the prostrate Irene. Serva lifted her mistress up, replaced her on the bed, and proceeded to carry Irene from the room.

For several weeks after this Irene lay sick of a fever, caught in the exercise of her charitable ministrations and intensified by the shock—the above revelations gave to her system. During this illness one of the priests was called in by her friends, and, at her own request, to anoint her with oil. This unction he performed in the presence of the assembled household, who knelt by the bedside of the sick woman and joined in prayer with her. It was night when the priest came, and large waxen tapers which burned with a calm and clear flame gave a hallowed light to the apartment. Above the bed was a carved image of our Lord, attached to a rude cross, and at one side hung a picture which represented St. Peter crucified, head downwards, and his brother St. Andrew attached to a peculiarly shaped cross, surrounded by a large concourse of people. These pictures showed the fearful kind of death endured by these two Apostles; but far from exciting disgust or terror, they stirred up in the hearts of the Christians who beheld them, an ardent desire to suffer tortures or even death itself in the cause of Jesus Christ. What a contrast this scene presented with Pontia's death-bed. Here there were tears, but the sorrow of parting was tempered by the assured hope of future meeting; there, abounded bitter wailings, despairing imprecations. Here all was peace, a forecast of heaven; there all unrest, a prelude of hell.

But Irene was destined to live a little longer; and from the time she received the Body of Christ and was anointed with the Holy Oil, she sensibly and rapidly recovered.



CHAPTER XXIII.

PERSECUTION.

THE plague had ceased at Rome ; but another scourge awaited at least a portion of its inhabitants. Although the Christians had shown themselves the only humane people abroad, for they alone cared for the sick and buried the dead, not only their own, but strangers, the pagan heart of the nation was not moved by the spectacle to better deeds. In a short time the good works of Christian priests and people were forgotten, and the old slanders were revived against them. In fact the pagan priests, who were put to shame by the heroism of the followers of the cross, began to whisper abroad that the plague, as well as the recent fires, and the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, were results of the Divine anger towards a people who tolerated the atheistic Christians to live unscathed among them. "Banish, burn, annihilate the followers of the crucified Jew," they used to say, "and the gods will once more be propitious." And the ungrateful Romans believed this blasphemy, and Maximin decreed a new persecution. Now, Irene, as soon as she was able to think quietly of the mysterious words of Pontia, felt that she might possibly trace the murderer of her lover and find out something to solve the strange problem before her. Who was Servius, and where was he ? These two questions must first be answered before she could proceed. It seemed to her that he was identical with the soldier who gave her up to Pontia ; but where was he ? She was one day thinking thus when Serva visited her, and among other things told her that she had overheard the plot to murder Julius. She was ignorant as to the identity of Julius then, and of course had to keep the secret. Now that Irene was interested in him, she did what she was able to promote the lady's inquiries, and after a time learned of the death of Servius in Gaul. This

news closed one avenue of information, and it only remained to find out in some indirect way, the particulars of Julius' death. It would have been easy to do this if Irene would but confide the matter to any man in power or even to Clement. But she would never consent to this; and had not the accidental revelation been made in presence of Serva by her dying mistress, the whole world would have remained ignorant of her secret. Already the mutterings of the not far distant thunder of persecution were audible in the city, and occasional flashes in the lurid sky foretold the violence of the coming storm. The clergy were appointing secret places of meeting, and the catacombs were once more to be tenanted by the silent worshippers who fled from the rack and torch of the executioner.

At length the storm broke. The pagan priests urged their devotees to hound down the objects of their jealousy, and the magistrates gave rewards to those who would bring Christians before their tribunals. Secret envy and avowed dislikes now found an occasion to vent themselves; and many a martyr won his crown through a grudge long nursed by a pagan neighbor. The prisons began to fill; and the Coliseum began to witness the heroic struggles of the martyrs. This great edifice was recent; Vespasian, not knowing, perhaps, what to do with so many captive Jews, set several thousand of them to work upon it. With its materials, and on its floor, they unwillingly mixed their sweat; but a few years after, the martyrs joyfully sanctified its arena with their blood. While the persecution lasted, the prayers of priests and people redoubled, and they were recommended, while avoiding arrest on the one hand, to keep themselves ever ready for that severest test to which a man's belief can be subjected. In the concealed chapels of the Catacombs, the sacrifice of the altar was daily offered up, and the weeping worshippers adored, with bated breath, the Son of God, who, under the sacramental species, visited them in their sorrows, and brought strength and consolation to their sore-tried spirits. Before the elements of bread and wine were presented to the priest who officiated, the deacons attending him would read a chapter from the Old Testament, generally from the Prophets. Then a portion of the Gospel would be read, and a homily thereon delivered by the

Bishop, who sat in the farthest part of the apse. Those who were under instructions, but not yet baptized, were not permitted to witness what followed, but withdrew from the church proper, and remained in the porch. Then the mystic words were pronounced over the bread and wine, the dim light of the tapers would be obscured by a cloud of sweet smelling incense, which rolled upward, and floated about the rough-hewn ceiling, as the prayers it represented sped aloft to the height of God's high throne. After a number of prayers were read in secret, the Lord's Prayer would be repeated aloud by the clergy and people ; and after this, all the clerics and most of the laity present would advance towards the altar to receive the Bread of Life, and drink of the Chalice of Benediction.

As Irene one day approached the altar, she was struck by the resemblance of one of the priests to her brother Cyprian. It was a fugitive thought, and she put it away as a distraction. Nevertheless, it frequently occurred to her during the remainder of the service ; but she would not raise her eyes to examine the priest's features a second time. She did not know who this priest was, and the next time she was in the chapel, he was not there. Some one, however, heard that a young priest, from Africa, had preached elsewhere a few weeks before. They did not know his name. Many recollections of past possibilities and realities came welling up from the fresh spring of her memory, as Irene, from time to time, saw the face in her mind's vision. But though it thus affected her, no thought of further inquiry suggested itself to her. That her dear brother was living, and actually in Rome, was so far from shaping itself as a possibility before her, that the nearest approach she made to such a thought, was the mental exclamation, "how like him," which, however, never took the form of words. Unostentatiously she fulfilled her exercises of devotion and charity, the battle sometimes requiring heroic courage. It was necessary to visit condemned Christians in prison, for instance, to gather their last wishes, or to offer a word of sympathy and encouragement, on the eve of their execution. Again, it was customary for some Christian to be present to witness the last struggle, to collect relics of the martyrs, or to obtain possession of the body in order to give it Christian burial. In all these trying situations Irene was the first to offer her services.

Once she visited the Mamertine. The first she saw after passing the guards was the robber, or pirate, who had detained her a prisoner at Cumæ. The recognition was mutual.

"You suppose," said he to the astonished Irene, "that I am here charged with the crime of piracy. I am not, I am a Christian." "A Christian," Irene repeated with increasing surprise. "The day you escaped," he continued, "a body of men were in pursuit of me and mine, while a fleet scoured the waters of the bay in search of our cave. The men whom, you perhaps, saw, were baffled, as any one would be, who looked for the land entrance. But the little girl whom you saw with us, betrayed us to those on the water, and we were taken and put in chains. The uncle of the little girl was the commander of the vessel. He sailed for Pompeii; but the vessel foundered and the child and I alone escaped. I was rescued by a Christian, whose courage and kindness surpassed any virtue I believed to exist in the world. He shared his bed and his food with me, and, as he was a fisherman, these were poor enough. His example forced me to love his creed, and I soon after gave up my wicked life and became a Christian. For a long time I have been the victim of lung disease, and though you may think I would long for death to get rid of my sufferings, which this cold, damp dungeon increases tenfold, I must confess I have become very cowardly, and fear the least pain." "What became of the child?" asked Irene, whose memory had often gone back to that innocent face. "The child," said the converted pirate after a severe fit of coughing, "is with its parents, I hope. I had her sent back to Alexandria, from which city we stole her, to the merchant Arbax, her father. I have never since heard whether or not she arrived there safely, but I did my duty to the best of my power, and may the Lord pardon me the rest." Irene encouraged him to bear up for a few days, and end as bravely as he began. But the poor man was dispirited—broken; and his mind was wandering, and when the trial came he denied his faith. Some time after, Irene again saw him entering a wretched hovel. His form was stooped, and he crept along leaning on a stick. She followed him. He was ashamed to meet her gaze, but he entreated her to send a priest to him to absolve his scandalous apostasy. Irene informed a priest, who, under the garb of a

beggar, visited and consoled the few remaining hours of the dying man. His fall was the effect of weakness of will, or perhaps even of mind, as his occasionally wandering talk would leave room to infer ; but his repentance was real and sincere, and grief for the crimes of his former life cost him more pain than the spasms of his fatal illness. He was not worthy of the martyr's crown, but that of the penitent thief was not denied him.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RIVAL'S SUCCESS.

A STEEP wall of hideous gray granite several hundred feet in height; at its foot a sloping embankment, covered with very green grass and water cress; a running stream still white from its raging conflict with the rocks at a sharp turn beyond there at the right; at the left, twenty feet away, a cloud of snow like vapor rising from another steep precipice over which the stream has plunged in order to reach the plain it seeks; an occasional stump sticking out of a cleft here and there in the rock; then a broken picket line of pines and oak, reaching from the embankment to the top of the granite wall before you; imagine yourself in such a place as this, dear reader, almost blinded by the mist, the upper part of which appears floating like a cloud far up on high, gilded by a halo of sunlight: the wind howling savagely, and the din of the tumbling water reducing you to deafness. Then imagine, if you can, a human form suddenly falling from yon high peak and disappearing among the trees. Branches are broken off and come rattling down to your feet; while a storm of detached leaves are carried eddying about, and scattered in every direction. What a cold thrill of horror would shoot through your very marrow, and you would almost curse the blast which purposely, you think, carries the mist right in front of you, shutting off your view. How your heart throbs till you solve the enigma, how he fell and what has become of him. Of course he is crushed to a pulp. It cannot be otherwise; but you, nevertheless, hurry off to find out. You scramble over the loose stones, and jump across the stream, and clamber upon the emerald embankment, before a counter wind scatters the mist away to your left, and you can see dis-

tingly into the trees and underbrush. You listen, but it is useless. You can hear no human voice above the combined roar of the wind and waters. So you beat your way through the tangled twigs and brambles and mount as high as you can. You then look into the trees, all of which seem to grow out horizontally from the precipitous rock, and then turn upwards. You see something hanging limp perhaps twenty feet above you. It is Julius! His clothes are nearly all torn from his back; his face is streaming with blood, and one of his arms lies twisted in such a way that you know it is broken. But is he dead? You stoop and listen for his breathing or moaning. Useless again! You place your hand on his breast, and his heart is beating. "Thank God," you say "he is not dead at any rate." And if you really had been there when Julius reached his present position, you would doubtless carry him down to the water and bathe and bind his wounds; but no one so kind as you was there; so Julius lay unheeded, except by a vulture that eyed him from above, and revolved in ever narrowing circles in the air, waiting for his death, in order to pounce upon and devour him. He lay there insensible to the gloom of the ravine—no merry sunbeam ever reached that spot—lay until far in the night. Then he awoke and gradually recovered, first his sensibility and afterwards his reason. First, he became conscious of a dull pain in the head, then in all his limbs, and in time he strove to raise his right arm, which lay broken and twisted under him. The sudden pain caused by this exertion brought back his full consciousness. It was a long time before he dared to move again, he simply lay there and groaned. He did not know whether it was night or day until looking directly upwards he saw some twinkling stars. He then understood that he had fallen over the precipice. Finding that his left hand was free, he groped about, and after awhile essayed to rise to a sitting posture. As he did so, he felt the bones of his broken arm, which hung useless at his side, crunching against each other, causing him untold suffering. By degrees his eyes became accustomed to the darkness; but all they could make out for him were the sullen rocks and trees towering far above him, and the water rushing along (a mile, it seemed) below him. Persons accustomed to travel at night, know how they will be deceived as to

the depth of even the little inequalities in a clay road. Had Julius known how easy it was to reach the stream in safety, he would have at once descended the little embankment to refresh himself; but he was afraid to move, and in his utter helplessness he lay down again, and fell asleep. It was broad daylight when he awoke, and this time, although he saw disappear the dangers he had feared during the night, others arose which were not a whit less threatening. His broken arm had swollen to a huge size, the deep cut in his forehead was aching furiously, the blood began to ooze from the clot which covered it, and his whole frame had become so stiff, by exposure to the cold night air, that it was extremely difficult for him to move about. How then would he hope to climb the rocks in order to reach the camp? Would they ever think of coming to look for him in such a place? Something must be done though, and done quickly. First of all he gathered the torn fragments of his clothing, which blew about here and there with the wind, and bound his broken arm to his body so as to keep it from further mischief. His sword was gone, but what would it avail him if an enemy were to come upon him in his present weak condition? Without letting difficulties of this kind, however, annoy him, he turned and followed the course of the stream in hopes of finding some part of the walls of the ravine less steep than where he stood. Toilsome was his search, and fruitless, worse than all. His pains increased with his fever, his fever with his exertions; and when at last his remaining strength gave out, he found that he could never hope to climb out of his rocky prison house. Death stared him in the face, death without honor, without glory. The thought maddened him, "gods," he cried, in his dejection, "Why cannot I face danger like those Christians, why can I not believe as they do." He might have gone into a long reverie hereupon, as he was accustomed to do when these grave thoughts came into his mind, but that mind was too feeble now. It refused to think except of his sufferings, and of these only in a half conscious way. He sat down on a huge boulder and leaned against a decaying stump for support. A few wild berries grew near him, and he plucked and eat them. Above him and beyond his reach he saw a species of vine, the fruit of which looked like grapes. He longed for a draught of wine; and as a child will stand

and stare at something it likes, but cannot get possession of, so Julius sat and looked up at the vine with an anxious, wistful look which brought him little consolation. But that vine saved his life. Had he not been looking aloft, he would never have seen the soldiers who were in search of him. They could not see him seated where he was, but he saw their shadows cast in giant magnitude upon the opposite wall. He summoned up all his strength—he never lacked courage—and went out where he could get a view of them, and they of him. They did not at first recognise Julius in the nearly naked form which beckoned to them; they thought, in fact, it was some German, who had been separated from his comrades, or wished to lead them into an ambuscade. The illusion quickly vanished, however, on a careful observation, and a number of men who were let down by means of ropes, were soon beside their commander, fully equipped to rescue him from his perilous situation. With proper attendance Julius recovered from his terrible fall; but his arm was somewhat deformed, and he was pronounced unfit, for a time, for further military service. Who his assailant was, no one could surmise, though when the strange circumstances attending the death of Servius were related to him, Julius at once suspected him of the crime. Then the fatal scrap of paper which he found in the tent inhabited by Irene and her father, seemed to find an author in the miscreant; and by degrees Julius worked out a theory which was correct in every particular, as the reader knows, that the black-hearted villain whom he had once foiled in the execution of his foul purpose, had become his evil genius through life. The horrible thought also crossed his mind that Servius had himself slain Irene, and left the blame on the Jew; yet it never struck him as possible, that his betrothed was perhaps still alive. How weak is human calculation, even the shrewdest?

As he would be a long time incapacitated to bear arms, Julius gave himself up to the kind of life he often wished to lead: to be free to wander abroad into all countries; to study their habits, the origin of the inhabitants, their philosophy and their religion. This was the ambition of the soldier philosopher, and now he leaped at the fortunate opportunity, lest it would escape from his grasp, in some unaccountable way. Alone, then, with his satchel of manuscript authors strapped

on his back, and dressed in the garb of a philosopher, for which he had laid aside the soldier's uniform, he went forth through the forest-clad Cevennes and Auvergne, along the picturesque banks of the Rhone, the Loire and the Seine, and, notwithstanding the fatigue, even into the very heart of Britain, beyond the military mural boundary. How easy the traveller of our century finds even the longest journeys! The telegraph prepares the way for him, and the fleet express rolls him comfortably from one city to another, while he can find lodgings to suit his means almost anywhere that the sound of the locomotive whistle is heard. Still rapid travelling has its drawbacks. The kaleidoscopic glimpses of country one snatches from a rail-car window hardly gratify the curious sight-seer, and furnish no clue to the history of the regions through which he seems to fly. But when one might cover at most fifty miles a day, and rarely so many; when hotel accommodation was next to unknown, or rather when every house became an inn for him who had money, and every door was shut in the face of him who had none—and these were the days when Julius lived—one was able to see and speak to the people of the towns and villages, to observe them narrowly, and in a word, to study to perfection both their country and themselves.

Over a hundred years had gone by since that wonderful man Julius Cæsar had travelled through Gaul, and everywhere subjected the poorly armed and worse disciplined barbarians to the Roman eagle. One hundred years! What a long time, yet how short in the lifetime of creation! During the particular hundred years we speak of, what chaos came upon the world, and what strange results from chaos. Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, and Rome bowed to a traitor. Pharsalia crushed the ambition of his rival, and floated the bark of his own rising fortune on a sea of Roman blood! Casca's dagger rent the sails and Cæsar fell. Then Antony ruled; he conquered Cæsar's slayers, and was smitten by the charms of a lewd woman. After a deluge of Roman blood had been spilled, Augustus rose to the surface, stemmed the torrent, seized the ship of state, and guided it into port. He smote Rome's other enemies, then stole her liberties away. The whole earth sick and sore from strife, lay down at the feet of the illustrious tyrant, content to have peace at any cost. Then the Prince of Peace

was born into the world and the Star of Redemption shone in distant Bethlehem. Its light steadily increased and shed itself over the whole earth. Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, alike felt its powerful influence. While the vast Roman empire was prostrate before the victorious legions, or paid a heartless but showy respect to the horrible monsters who bore the title of emperor, Christianity was quietly doing the work appointed for it by its Divine founder. Society was all but extinct; the mission of the Church was to build up a new civilization upon its ruins. Only a hundred years! And yet the greatest empire ever built up by man had in that space shown the most evident signs of its coming total disruption. Only a hundred years! Yet, in less than half that time, the greatest of revolutions—Christianity—had gained a permanent foothold in the world, and proved itself stronger than imperial arms and edicts.

Wherever Julius travelled this great fact stared him in the face. Among the tribes in Gaul, he discovered a great respect for women, and an absence of those fearful obscenities that prevailed in the cities of civilization; and he forthwith asked himself the question, what had the civilization he was used to done for those who came under its influence? The savages of the woods worshipped a Supreme Being of some sort, and believed in a future state of rewards and punishments; besides they were more sober and more chaste than the best educated classes of Rome. Now and again he came upon some who had been taught the doctrines of Christianity, and they were more upright and religious than their pagan brethren. He was thus able to see the contrast between the results of Christianity and Pagan civilization, or philosophy, in the most marked and exact manner; and his mind was drawn to a conclusion ever more and more favorable to the proscribed religion. Merchants, who had been converted, taught the heavenly doctrine to their customers. Slaves taken in battle taught it to their captors and fellow slaves, and an occasional Apostolic preacher could be found, who had penetrated far into the heart of a country, in which nearly a hundred tribes fought for existence, and preached it to the princes and their courts. Sunny France was in those days perhaps as deserving of the title as to-day; but neither in all her broad expanse of

level country, nor on the sloping hill-sides, could one see the creeping tendrils of the vine ; and the wines, which the wealthy Narbonese chose to exhibit as a delicacy at their banquets, were imported from below the Appenines. No single hand swayed the forces of that country then, no royal edict could direct the patriotism of its fiery-tempered inhabitants ; yet the apostles of the cross planted there the seeds of the tree of faith, that has blossomed and fructified so prodigiously ; and if France was at one time the grandest and most civilized of commonwealths, blessed alike with civil and religious unity, she owed her good fortune to the faith of St. Denis. But the seed was sown in blood. In every city in the six divisions of Gaul, Julius found Christians arraigned before the magistrates for no other crime than professing the religion that taught them to become better citizens and better men. He often represented to the magistrates the inexpediency, not to speak of the injustice, of assailing one kind of religion, while all others were tolerated ; but these men (in many cases undergoing honorable exile) governed the distant provinces of the Empire, like the famous, or infamous, Varro. They thought of one thing only—the extension of their fortune. Human life—the decimation of the province, and such things were no business of theirs, and it was therefore most unlikely that they would make any recommendation to the Emperor in favor of the persecuted Christians. Pliny alone among the governors of the provinces was bold enough to broach the subject to his superior, and ask instructions ; and the answer he received was worthy of the cruel and shifting spirit of the paganism which dictated it. Now, however, when the new edicts of Domitian urged the magistrates to exterminate the disturbers of the peace of the empire, as the Christians were called, no reasoning in their favor would be listened to ; but all the engines of a refined cruelty were set in motion against them, Julius hastened forward, and crossed into Britain. During his short stay in the Island, he came upon a Druids' grove. The religion of the Druids flourished in Germany and in Britain from an early period. Like Brahminism in India, it preached a system of castes, or social grades, the highest of which was the priesthood. The Druids were the priests, lawgivers and physicians of the people. Their power was unlimited, and not

even the sovereign could resist it successfully. During the reign of Tiberius, Druidism was put down; but it flourished in Britain and in Ireland in spite of the Emperors. Julius had read Cæsar's account of the Druids, but now for the first time he saw one of their picturesque places of sacrifice. He approached the grove from the south, when the sun was bidding his farewell to mist-clad earth. Nearest him were a few lofty pines on the outskirts of the oak forest. They stood in the still evening, their long, slightly swaying branches stretched out, and reaching upwards, as if in prayerful supplication. Now they seem, as the west wind sighs about them, to mourn over a stately comrade, whose lengthy, limbless, moss-covered corse lies prone in the sands. Its upper portion is pillowed by stray leaves and cones, and a few arched branches of sister trunks that it grasped in vain for support, wrenched off in its despair, and buried in its fall. Now they rustle in whispering rebuke to the numerous offshoots which nod to one another with their tiny heads, or sweep irreverently with their waving plumes the parent trunk, as if in wayward sport; while the wanton breezes toy with their baby cones, or kiss the distilling dew from their silky needles. As he advanced beyond these weird sentinels of the grove, the forest seemed to recede from his path, and form on each side what might be called the wall of an immense amphitheatre. Passing a few large boulders which stood at the entrance, he soon reached the centre, from which the view was simply entrancing. All around and about him was a delicious level green-sward extending away to the very limit of his vision, where to the north an apparent glade divided the dark blue outline of forest, that was discernible on every hand. The numerous paths which seemed to diverge from the centre in several directions were bordered with a profusion of tiny white daisies and yellow buttercups which seemed to wrestle mirthfully with the long waving grass. They looked as if they wished to be seen, to delight the passer-by with their sweetness of color, of structure, and of odor, before being trampled down into their parent sod. The surface of the cleared space was ever so little undulating, and resembled the dead rolling of the ocean, long after the winds have returned to their cave. Nor did the suggestive similarity of the sea end here; for

where the grass was knee deep, the action of the wind on its dark green blades brought up the resemblance to such a degree of perfection, that it became necessary, after observing the motion for some time, to use a violent effort to dispel the charming illusion that the wavelets were not rising and falling on the surface of genuine water. Two murmuring streamlets which united farther on, forming a little brook, appeared to complain of the well-worn rocks that here and there interrupted their gentle flow, and warped their course into irregular semicircular paths, or caused their deep but narrow waters to expand, under a sputtering protest, into broad and shallow lakelets. To the right, or directly before him as he stood facing the sinking sun, the undulations in the soil grew into hillocks, and these again into hills, which were crowned by a species of heath; and still farther on these irregular mounds melted into one vast wave of uprising land, about a hundred feet in height at its summit, where it lost itself in a wooded plain. Here the oak forest seemed to sway; and as each wooded plain rose above another like steppes, the farthest off at the horizon seemed a mere dull bluish mist, where only a few gigantic pines resented any confusion of their identity. Yet to the ordinary observer, they looked, standing out against the bronzed heavens, like fantastic minarets of an air constructed castle.

Lovely as the scene was to the eyes of Julius, to an old man, with a gray beard extending to his knees, who emerged from the ruins of the temple which once stood proudly there, it was the saddest of sights. He engaged in conversation with the Roman, whose language he understood but could not speak well, and explained how the grand temple which stood in the centre of the vast grove was levelled by the Emperor's orders. "Long grass grows now," said he. "where once there was a temple and an altar. These ruins are my home, who was once the chief priest of my caste; yet I will pass my few failing years here" and he moved his outstretched right hand from side to side in a rueful way. As he spoke, a number of rabbits appeared hard by, but seeing the intruders on their solitary grounds, hopped away instantly out of sight. "You must have good hunting here," said Julius, as his fancy ran over the sport of rabbit hunt, "I almost envy your lot."

The Druid stepped back with a look of horror, and held up his hands by way of holy protest. "O sacrilegious man," he exclaimed, "do you not know that these animals are sacred? But you do not," he continued reflectively, "the souls of my fellow-men are in them; they are sacred. Our souls pass into the low animals first, then ascend through the higher and more intelligent forms, until at last, having expiated their guilt, they rise to the perfection of Divinity." Julius laughed aside, recognizing in the Druid's doctrine the Egyptian transmigration of souls, and asked him if he had ever heard of the religion of Jesus. The Druid shuddered, and replied that some of that faith were indeed in the islands, but were few in number, and likely soon to die out. "They hate our gods," said the old man, "they are atheists." Julius parted with him remarking that it was more likely his religion would die out than that of Christ, judging from his own experience of the steadfastness of its votaries. One thing, however, struck him as worthy of notice in Druidism, it was the belief (which he had encountered the world over) that sin existed in the soul, and that it needed expiation. The discovery satisfied him that the universal conviction regarding the existence of the soul, its undying nature, and its responsibility, was not an invention of priests, or kings, or any set of men whatever; but an independent, spontaneous teaching of human nature, and therefore necessarily founded in truth and fact.

As he retraced his steps and sauntered back to the village, his mind returned to the thoughts which had occupied it at the moment when his assassination was attempted by Servius. That God would not create man as he now is, he felt assured; and he further perceived the fact that death, and therefore all lesser evils, were a punishment of some original fault. How it could be imputed to all men, he did not understand; but there were many things in nature, such as the manner of his birth, the conversion of food into the substance of his flesh, and the like, which were at least as insoluble mysteries. And he moreover clearly understood that it was a surer, as well as a wiser philosophy, to secure by all possible means the promised immunity from suffering in the life to come, than brave the possible anger of the Deity, by discrediting things he did not understand. Plato had taught him "to be virtuous and wait for a

Divine teacher," and it seemed to him that if the great Greek were now alive, he would examine with all seriousness the doctrines of the only religious Teacher who ever dared to call himself God.

But the arrival of a letter turned his thoughts to another, and hardly less serious subject. It was an unusually large letter, sealed and tied up with a strong string. It bore the seal of the Roman general, and came from the camp he had left many months before. He hurriedly broke the seal and, as he opened it out, a second letter inclosed within the folds of the first, dropped upon the floor. He cast a look at it, and without stooping to pick it up, began to read the one he held in his hands. It opened with a wish that the gods had fully restored his health, etc, and then imparted the information that the general had, on the very day Julius left the camp, received a note from a lady at Rome, inquiring for the particulars of his death. "That's Pontia," said Julius aloud, and he went on reading. Imagine his astonishment when he read that the lady's name was Irene! He leaped up, held the letter out at arm's length, and looked again at it. Then he sat down and rubbed his eyes, held it firmly in both hands, and read the whole epistle over again. There was no mistake this time. He trembled so that he could hardly proceed. The letter went on to say that the general had answered the lady's inquiry, by stating that Julius, though badly hurt, was alive and away on his march. The enclosed letter (which lay there on the floor unopened thus far), arrived some days ago, and was forwarded with all haste. Julius read no more, but in an ecstasy of joy flung the general's letter from him, and snatched up the neglected note. He looked at the superscription in Irene's handwriting—it was as indelibly fixed on his memory as her features—and kissing the seal, he broke it carefully.

Who will attempt to describe his feelings at that moment? Who will portray the joy, the hopes, the fears, the pain, that one after the other then altogether swept his soul? "She is dead," he repeated, "and yet she writes to me. What mystery is this?" With a palpitating heart, and tearful eyes, he read the few lines it contained; but few or many, it bore the signature which alone he worshipped. "My Irene," he would repeat, from time to time, as he went over and over the

writing, or passionately kissed or hugged it close to his heart. Who will dare to laugh at such seemingly senseless actions, or say with scornful accent that they were unbecoming in a man, and a soldier? They know not of the intensity of human feeling, nor how to prize the relics of love, who would thus moralize. They have not felt the deep pathos of the tenderest yet strongest passion of the heart; the passion which, when directed towards a Divine ideal, once urged a king to dance before an ark. Blame not, then, the man—for what is man but the child with newer toys—blame him not, who, after a bereavement of years, finds that the idol of his first and only love has risen, like the Phoenix, from her ashes.

The letter was cautiously worded, and evidently betrayed some doubt in the writer; for, like Julius, Irene could scarce believe him to be alive, whom she had long mourned among the dead. "If he who reads these lines is really Julius," it read, "he will know by this handwriting who I am; and if he still cares for me, let him prove his identity by detailing the circumstances of our first meeting. My hand trembles as I pen these words, for I seem to see death leering at me. Joy, if withal I have found—excuse my emotion—it will be understood by *my* Julius, and pitied, or pardoned, by a stranger. Answer, I beseech you, and put an end to my doubts." Without delay Julius detailed the circumstances as required, and said a great many things besides, which it would be cruel to reproduce here, as they belong to a realm which it is not lawful for others than lovers to explore. We may state this, however, that Julius promised to go to Rome by the shortest route, for fear of further obstacles; and he kept his promise, or at least he began to fulfil it, for within a week he had left the British shores, and was travelling south through Gaul. But when he reached his old camp, he was commissioned to go at once into Spain to put down an insurrection of robbers. He was sufficiently recovered to take command of troops; and although he wished to go direct to Rome, he was the only one who could be trusted with so important a commission. Immediately he dictated another note to Irene, explaining the delay, reiterating his promises and pledging his fidelity, and set out for a country that was at this epoch not yet civilized; where, as Plutarch says, "robbery was considered an honorable pur-

suit." It was not intended that Julius should expose himself in battle, but simply give directions to his subordinates how to manage the campaign. On the day he set out he heard that a great Christian Bishop had suffered martyrdom in Paris, only a few leagues from where he lay. He so managed, thereupon, as to go by that city in his course, although somewhat out of his way. He learned that a large body of Christians lived in and about that ancient capital. Going to the jail where the martyr had been confined, he inquired into the history of the great Saint. It so happened that one of the jailers was a Christian, and on assurance that he would not be betrayed, he gave Julius the following history of Dionysius, the Areopagyte. "The martyr," said he, "was a native of Athens. He once observed an unusual eclipse of the sun, and being learned in the movements of the heavenly bodies, he exclaimed, 'Either the God whomade the universe is suffering, or nature itself is on the point of dissolution. When St. Paul afterwards preached the death of Jesus, whom we believe to be the Son of God, this philosopher remembered that the eclipse, which happened at the time of His crucifixion, corresponded with the one he had himself seen so unexpectedly ; and, turning to his friends of the Areopagus, he proclaimed to them the truth of the Apostle's words. He became a Bishop, and was sent into Gaul to preach the Gospel. By his preaching many have come to know the truth, and our Præfect, Fescennius, thinks that when he is dead we shall all become pagans again.' "But you will not," said Julius, inquiringly, "We would follow him to death rather," replied the jailer." "But, sir," he continued, "why would you know so much about Dionysius, if you are not a Christian ? You seem interested—perhaps you knew him ?" "No," said Julius, gravely, I did not know him ; but I am a philosopher, and therefore interested in a philosopher's fate, as well as in his belief." "Then you seem half a Christian," said the other. "Perhaps I am," replied the soldier, with a faint smile. "But tell me," and his manner changed suddenly, as if an important thought had come to him, "have you any relic of the—martyr, you would call him ?" "I have a handkerchief steeped in his blood," said the jailer, "but—" "I would give you—." He was going to offer money for the relic, but the jailor anticipated him, and, cutting him short, replied : "Sir, the relic is above

price. I dare not traffic it for money ; but if I were sure you would respect the treasure, I would share it with you." "I promise on my honor, and I swear to keep it as carefully as you would yourself." "What could be the motive of such a request on the part of a pagan," the jailer asked himself when Julius had taken his departure. He was unable to answer, but he felt that the grace of God was working a conversion in the soldier's heart.

The journey was rapidly made into Spain, and it was a cause of great satisfaction to Julius to lead a body of Roman troops over the very mountains, and through the same pass that was chosen by Hannibal, when, nearly four hundred years previously, he led his victorious Africans into Italy. Caius Marius, the famous consul, when governor of Spain, had a century before cleared his province of the bands of robbers who infested it ; but from time to time, their power grew strong enough to worry the government ; and in the present instance they had become so insolent, that they were promised a speedy extermination. It was no easy task, however, to follow them into their mountain fastnesses, and track them through the virgin forests which covered that favored land ; but failure was unknown to Roman arms, once they undertook a work, no matter how great ; and on this occasion their speedy though hard-earned triumphs won for their commander new distinction and additional glory.

As soon as his commission was fulfilled, Julius made for the straits of Hercules—the modern Gibraltar—and set sail for Ostia, Rome's great seaport, with favorable winds only seven days distant. If the persecution was bloody in the provinces, it might be said to be devilish at Rome in the atrocity of the cruelties perpetrated on the Christians. All along the road from Ostia to Rome, it was the constant theme of conversation. Some took a fiendish delight in relating incidents of the struggle ; others were more thoughtful, who, though themselves pagans, had lost beloved friends and relations, converts to Christianity. It now struck Julius, for the first time, as possible his betrothed might be included among the proscribed ; and a death-like feeling crept over him as the fear took shape in his mind, that perhaps Irene was already a martyr, or on the way to martyrdom. And the malicious joke

made at his expense by Servius, years before, in the camp at Palestine, that he might yet meet his beloved at the block, came back to his memory, and assumed a hideous reality, that made him start and grow pale. Just then he entered the city, and the first words he heard a ruffian say to his companions were, "*So that Irene will be examined again to day, and I hope to see the magistrate act more like a man, and burn her.*" Julius who thought every hour an age till he reached the city, was all on fire with expectancy, now that he was within the gate. He was trying to shake off the dread occasioned by his fearful fancies when those words grated on his ears. In an instant he was on the fellow's throat with a bound like a tiger's, and shaking him as he would a cloak, he roared rather than said, "Villain, viper, who is this Irene you would see burned, is she a Christian? Answer quickly!" The wretched man gasping for breath, answered that she was, and begged his assailant to spare his life. The man was an athlete, and several pugilists stood around, but none of them would contend with Julius in his rage. With a terrific blow he laid the ruffian senseless on the pavement, and drew his sword to pierce the prostrate form. "By the eternal fires," he swore, "who wishes to burn a Christian is my enemy." Then mastering himself, he put up his sword and hurried from the spot.



CHAPTER XXV.

THE BETROTHED IN THE ARENA.

Non è il mondan rumor altro ch' un fiato
Di vento ch' or vien quinci, ed or vien quindi
E muta nome perche muta lato,

—*Dante, Purgatorio, Canto XI.*

“—The noise
Of worldly fame is but a blast of wind
That blows from divers points; and shifts its name,
Shifting the point it blows from.—”

—*Cary's Translation.*

THE family of which Irene had become a member was very distinguished at Rome. Flavius Clemens was the associate of Domitian in the consulate, before the latter became Emperor, and was related by blood to the imperial family. It was not to be expected, therefore, that such an eminent person would be the first to suffer for his faith, when the persecution began. But unnatural as it seemed, the brutal Emperor, as soon as he ascended the throne, summoned his kinsman before him, and accused, judged and condemned him with the most indecent haste. Flavius suffered death, his wife was banished from the city, and his property was confiscated to the state, which meant the Emperor's purse. Such a spectacle disgusted every one, save the fanatics, who would willingly see the utmost cruelties perpetrated on those whom they looked upon as enemies of both gods and men. The servants of the murdered consul were also put to death, and the names of Saints Nereus and Achilleus, which we find in the calendar at the 12th of May, show that the Church honors those on her altars, whom tyrants judged worthy of an ignominious death. Irene was then driven to seek some

other home. She had some difficulty in finding one; for being very active among the martyrs, both in prison and at the amphitheater, she was well known to the magistrates, and might, any day, bring the sword of the executioner upon those who harbored her. At last, however, she was successful, and the roof of poor Tullius' father, who had recently become a Christian, afforded her a shelter. During the plague his two daughters were carried off and himself lay very low, when Irene visited him. Under her treatment he recovered, and being persuaded by her self-sacrificing example to love the religion that inspired her, he yielded to the invitation of grace.

Meanwhile Cyprian, who had fulfilled his mission in Rome, was about to be sent as legate to Corinth, to settle, in the name of the successor of Peter, a dispute which arose in that turbulent city between the clergy and some of their flock. The litigants might indeed have appealed to St. John the Evangelist, who was much nearer them, to settle their controversy; but the dispute was of such a nature as required the decision of the head of the Church. Venerable as St. John undoubtedly was, they believed that the successor of the chief of the Apostles was the only competent judge and supreme arbitrator on earth, in all matters regarding faith and church discipline.

In the instructions given the legates whom St. Clement sent to Corinth on this occasion, he speaks of his apostolic powers, and designates the several persons whom he appoints to act in his name.* Now it happened just as Cyprian was preparing to set out on his journey, that he received a reply to a letter which he had addressed to Nilos inquiring after Anna. The letter was from the lady herself, and gave her cousin an epitome of her history from the time of their separation to the date of writing. Some of the details were harrowing in the extreme, and caused the young priest copious tears, but the ending brought back joy and consolation to his spirit. She related how her master, Nilos, had fallen ill and called in the Bishop to baptize him a Christian. "Hereupon," the letter read, "he became suddenly well, and in a spirit of thanksgiving manumitted all his slaves. I was the first to regain my liberty, and

* Since the discovery of a MS. copy of this vigorous epistle in the Royal Library, dating from the Nicene Council, no doubt exists among the learned of its genuineness.

the first act of my freedom was to consecrate myself to the service of the altar. I am too young to be admitted to the honor of a deaconess, which office I hope some day to be worthy to fill; but I give the brethren what assistance I can meanwhile, and help to distribute the alms to the poor. O cousin!" she concluded, "how happy I feel at times when I reflect on the honor I have been chosen for—to be near the altar, and enrolled among the virgins of the sanctuary. But what a happiness is yours, who can handle and distribute the Body of the Lord. How great is the priestly dignity!" Cyprian's great fear had been that she would grieve for the hopelessness of ever possessing him, since he had vowed a life of celibacy; but the letter dispelled that fear, and a great load seemed, when he had finished reading, to fall from his heart. As he was to return to Alexandria after visiting Corinth, he felt sure of seeing Anna; therefore he wrote but a short letter to her, expressing his joy at having discovered his long lost cousin, and his hope of soon seeing her where they could talk at leisure over the past, and encourage each other in the pursuit of eternal happiness. "Did not my duty force me elsewhere," he concluded, "I would set out to-morrow for Alexandria; but I am in God's hands, the servant of the Church and no longer my own master wholly."

He despatched this letter the day before his own intended departure for Corinth, and got everything ready for the journey. He then lay down and disposed himself to sleep, but sleep came not to him. He lay awake thinking of the wonderful complexity of human life. How strange it all seemed to him. Here he was on the point of seeing again the city of his birth—his father's house; who occupied it now? The lawn before the door—the library—the peristyle—the fountain about which he played when a child and watched the circling eddies as he threw the pebbles in—the picture of his mother in that room—his murdered mother—Irene—his dead brothers lying under that cold blue stone—his father cruelly separated from him—then all the tenderest of tender situations, and the sacredest of sacred reunions and conversations and caresses—the rippling laughter of childhood—the toys and games of boyhood—in short, the history of his young life passed before him like the phantoms of a dream and left him unutterably sad, and

hopelessly alone. A vague weird spirit of lonesomeness stole upon him with these memories of the past, and for a few moments he lay infinitely dejected and oppressed ; but he found a solace in prayer, a short fervent prayer, and soon after fell asleep. Wearied by the activity of his mind his sleep was broken and unrefreshing ; his mother's sweet face haunted him throughout the night, beckoning him to follow her into all sorts of entanglements and dreary and dangerous places. The contrast between her loveliness and the hard-heartedness she developed as she drew her son into all manner of suffering appalled him, while the ease with which she skimmed over gulfs and dark abysses which it cost him (it seemed) ages of painful effort to traverse, caused him to regard her with mingled feelings of astonishment and awe. He would have longed to clasp her to his bosom, to call her once more mother ; but he could not approach her—he could not even love her—yea, he was forced to hate her ! He awoke from this distressing perversion of natural impulses and emotions, glad to find it all unreal ; and as it was morning he arose and hastened to prepare himself by prayer to offer the Holy Sacrifice previous to setting out on his journey.

When he gained the street he saw crowds, early as it was, hastening in the direction of the Forum, and on enquiry, he learned that a Jew was going to be interrogated by the Prætor ; that his name was John, and that he had been brought from Asia Minor. Immediately it came to Cyprian's mind that it was the Evangelist, and at once he set off to learn the truth. The ground of his surmise was this, that an ordinary individual would hardly be brought all the way to Rome for trial. And he was right, for truly enough the prisoner was St. John, whose age and venerable appearance would command the respect of savages. As the Saint appeared, led by the guards, who were obliged to support him, one on each side to keep him from falling, the rabble who surrounded the magistrate, and reached all the way to the gates of the prison from which the Apostle was taken, set up a shout and demanded that he be thrown to the wild beasts in the theater. Others called out to burn the magician slowly to death, while others again cried out to nail him to a cross. When, at length, by frequent threats, the magistrate had secured silence, he proceeded with the interrogatory. The

feeble old man's answers were hardly audible ; but such as they were they gave the Prætor no satisfaction. At last he demanded, in a rage, whether the disciple was willing to abandon Christ and sacrifice to the gods of the Empire ? The answer to this question was more distinct than his former responses ; and although it was not heard by the crowd, that it was unsatisfactory was proved by the prompt action of the judge. Amid the furious yells of the *canaille*, he sentenced him to death, and gave some order to the chief licitor. There was a hurried rushing about of officers, and in a few minutes a huge pot or cauldron was rolled into the open space before the tribune, and a fire kindled under it with pitch and resin pine. Oil was now poured into the vessel, and in a very short time vapor began to ascend from it, and oil to bubble over the sides and trickle down upon the fire, thereby increasing its fury. Meanwhile the Apostle was violently stripped of his clothing, seized by four men and thrown headlong into the seething oil. The men danced about wringing their hands for pain, or rolled on the ground shouting madly for aid, as they pressed their flayed palms against their faces. The oil which was displaced when the Evangelist was thrown into the cauldron, splashed out upon and scalded these men in a fearful manner. But, lo ! there stood the Holy Apostle unhurt ; not only unhurt, but refreshed, as if he had been placed in a delicious bath of tepid water. The Prætor was beside himself with fear and rage ; and lest the crowd—always fickle as he knew—might begin to adore the martyr as a god, he ordered him to be taken out of the oil and hurried back to prison. Many did fall down at his feet as he passed along, a circumstance which did not escape the notice of the officers ; and the most vehement in his endeavors to get near the Saint was Cyprian. He had been a long time struggling, elbowing his way forward to reach his master, wishing to die with him who had made him a priest. At last his efforts were successful, and at the prison gate the Apostle recognized his disciple kneeling before him. A few minutes more and the gates had closed on both, as the guard could not separate the two friends. "Leave him," said the head jailer to Cyprian, when he saw him brought in ; "we have too many here already." "Save yourself," said the Evangelist, "save yourself, my son, we can-

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not spare priests." "He is a Christian," said one of the scalded guards, who wanted to torture somebody, "are you not?" addressing the young man. "I am," replied Cyprian proudly, "and I would like you to torture me instead of this old man, whom you ought to be ashamed to maltreat." "No words, young man," said the jailer, striking him with a large key, as he urged John forward with his foot, "you will get enough to gratify you before you leave here." And so Cyprian did not go to Corinth.

A few days after this, the Evangelist was sent away to the barren isle of Patmos, in the *Ægean* sea, and Cyprian was brought before the magistrate to answer for his defiance of the Emperor's edict. The cell where he was confined was an underground dungeon, cold, damp, without light from the sun and full of vermin and every kind of nameless filth. Prisoners were thrust down into this horrid place in dozens during the persecutions, and their food was a bit of bread of the vilest kind, and once a day, when the guards would not forget to serve it, a little water. The stench was almost intolerable, and many went mad by the very fact of being shut up in such an earthly hell. For several successive days Cyprian was taken out of this place, tempted to abandon his faith, and after a stretching on the rack, which nearly dislocated all his limbs, was thrust down again to suffer on the cold rock. This was the plan chosen to vanquish his stubborn will. The precious Roman Emperors, in their lucid intervals, recognized the value to the State of human life; and so, they *mercifully* strove by racks and tortures, which only crippled or disfigured the victims, to bring them round to a more obedient way of acting or believing: they took their lives only when it was apparent that tortures were unavailing.

As on the fourth day they found the martyr as firm as ever, they varied his torture by applying torches to his sides and feet. The pain caused by this fiendish invention was frightful, but when it was at its worst, and the martyr groaned to his Lord for help, a sweet voice from the crowd, a voice he instantly recognized as Irene's, fell upon his ears like the brush of an angel's wing. The tongue it spoke in was Greek, and the words were, "be courageous, dear brother, make secure your crown." Talk of the fortitude of Spartan mothers: none

of them ever evinced the superhuman courage of the mother of the Maccabees, who stood by and encouraged her seven sons, while one after the other, they were subjected to the most atrocious cruelties. And Irene may be ranked with *her* among the small number of genuine heroines. Strong men have often sickened at the sight of mangled human flesh ; but this woman stood her ground while her own dear brother was roasting. It wrung her heart to see Cyprian agonizing at the feet of his triumphant enemies—enemies too of the truth of God ; and like David, she might have cried out, "How long O Lord wilt Thou forget me unto the end ? how long dost Thou turn away Thy face from me ?" No such interpretative complaint, however, escaped her. Though years had rolled by since she was separated from him, and although when discovered, he was enduring torments that would have drawn tears from the very stones of the Forum ; no womanish weakness, no false tenderness was manifest in her conduct, but, on the contrary, a sublime resolution and sacrifice of self.

The report that Cyprian was in prison spread among the Christians soon after his arrest. Irene, as the reader will remember, was once struck by the resemblance of the young strange priest to her brother. When she learned further that his name was Cyprian, and that he was a Greek by birth, it was no wonder she sought an interview with him ; but his imprisonment interposed a difficulty. She tried to gain admittance to the dungeon ; but the guards, usually willing to grant such request for a small money consideration, denied her the privilege on this occasion. Desperate, yet determined, she went to the Forum on the fourth day of his public suffering—she had been at the Coliseum the other three mornings, trying to secure parts of the bodies of the martyrs torn by lions—and when she saw her brother, it needed all the strength of a heroine to control her feelings. But she succeeded in stifling those merely human sentiments that would urge her to his side, in order at any sacrifice—perhaps by whispering to him to deny his faith—to save his life. Who can tell what evil her word might have effected at that trying instant ? But God's grace made her equal to the occasion, and superior to her nature ; and from a distance she addressed him in the language given above. She venerated him as already a martyr, and rejoiced because

she seemed to see a crown suspended above his head by the hands of angels. He heard her voice in that moment of supreme agony, and turning his eyes in the direction whence it came, strove in vain to detect his sister in the throng. Many besides him heard that voice too, though they understood not what it said ; but there was one present who recognized Irene, and at once proceeded to accuse her of being a Christian ; it was the slave whom Tullius had sent with his final invitation to her, the day before the great triumphal procession. If the reader will but call to mind how insolent this slave became on that occasion, he will readily understand the motive of his present conduct. On his complaint she was seized and carried off to prison, that prison where she had so often imparted consolation and encouragement to future martyrs. Meanwhile Cyprian was taken back to his dungeon, and salt put on his wounds to increase the acuteness of his pains. He had tired out the magistrate, who now resolved to let him die of his festering sores in the loathsome cell, rather than punish him again in public. The reason is obvious. Half a dozen of the men employed to torture him had declared themselves Christians, and three of them were beheaded on the spot. Hundreds of others also, though they did not court martyrdom, ceased to appear in the temples, and were only waiting for the end of the persecution to abandon for ever the idolatrous worship of the Empire. As Irene was placed far from that part of the prison where her brother was confined, it was impossible for her to see him, even if she knew him to be there. It would be a great consolation for her to converse with him, but a greater one seeing how much he suffered, to know that he had passed to his reward. Her inquiries among the guards were fruitless ; so there was nothing left to her but to remain in doubt, and await prayerfully and with patience her own turn to suffer. It came next day. She was led publicly before the judges, who were at once struck by her beauty,* and fascinated by her replies. They cajoled and flattered her, and one even offered her, privately his hand and fortune, if she would but give up the "Atheistic sect," and sacrifice to the gods. As promises failed, threats were resorted to, and with no better success. Irene only smiled at their vain efforts to corrupt her, and proceeded to defend her belief. She was remanded to prison.

Next day, when she was brought into court, she was confronted by a number of pagan priests and learned men, who sought to convince her by argument of the folly of her faith, and the truthfulness of theirs. Not only did she reduce them to humiliating silence ; but she converted several of them to a belief in Christianity. These latter were ordered by the magistrate to be immediately beheaded, and their property was forfeited to the State. Irene was then sent back to prison and sentenced to be whipped with rods. That night she was visited by the old senator (the father of Tullius), who wept like a child when she told him how she had been treated. She bade him to rejoice rather than to be sad, "for we become," said she, "more like our Divine teacher, the more we suffer in this life. How many persons," she continued, "suffer through sickness, cruel wounds, bereavements and afflictions of soul equal to any we endure, and get no reward for it all, because they will not accept it from the hand of God in a right spirit, or because they are ignorant why or whence it comes, or that it is permitted for their greater good ? Why, then, should not we be grateful for the knowledge we possess through our Faith, that every momentary affliction, and every passing pain, borne with resignation, will be rewarded an hundred fold in our celestial home ? Even if we should receive no reward," she went on in an enthusiastic way, "is it not a privilege worth our very life, to be like our dear Lord, patient sufferers ?" "Irene," answered the old man with a sad smile, "I am nearly tired of life. I have seen some happy days, and many, many unhappy ones ; but your words would almost make me wish to live it all over again, so that I might endure its crosses in a proper spirit."

At this moment the low door opened, and a stout, heavy-bearded man, with a wild appearance, entered. "Time for you to go," said he curtly to the senator, whose identity was unknown to him. With a farewell bow to Irene, the latter withdrew, and she heard his heavy, uncertain steps descending the narrow staircase which led to the street. "Get up," said the jailer, holding his lantern aloft, "get up and follow me." There were twenty persons in the small room. They followed the stout man into a larger apartment. "I am ordered to strangle fifteen of you right away," said he in just such a voice as one

would expect to hear from such a man, and without a moment's hesitation every one of those twenty people exclaimed together, "let me be one." "May Pluto take you," said the grizzly-beard in a rage, "what haste you make to leave this world." "Charon will have quite a job if he attempts to row them all across the Styx at once," said an attendant from the gloom of the door-way, "I remember—" "Here, draw the lots, this is no time to prate," said the head jailer to the jocose assistant, who, with this unappreciative rejoinder to spur him on, set spitefully about his task. The chosen fifteen were marched into another cell, singly, as their turn came. In this cell, at the height of about five feet from the floor, two holes were hewn right through the rear wall, about three inches each in diameter, and six inches apart. The executioner stood behind this wall in another room, and passed one end of a chain through one of the holes. The martyr was then told by the assistant to stand with his back to the wall, when the chain was drawn across his neck and back through the second hole, into the executioner's hands, who then twisted the chains till they tightened on the victim, and choked him to death. This was the process of death by strangulation employed in the Mamertine prison in the case of many and many a Christian confessor, whose name is not honored on earth—where his fate was never known—while he partakes in his true home, of that joy which no man shall take from him.

Irene spent the night in prayer, but towards morning in spite of her efforts to remain awake she became drowsy, and slept until summoned by the guards to go before the Prætor. It was a dull sultry morning. Though but nine o'clock, the sun blazed with the greatest fury through the moist atmosphere. It was refreshing, however, to feel the glow after the chill of the abominable prison air. Crowds of well-dressed and poorly-dressed but all thinly clad pleasure-loving Romans were winding slowly along towards the lofty Coliseum. As the weather threatened to be stormy, the vast canvas curtains which were made to be spread across the roofless enclosure to keep out rain and excessive sunshine, flapped lazily, as they hung ready for immediate use. The wire screen which surrounded the arena to keep the wild beasts from rushing out among the spectators was made secure, and in a word, every-

thing was in readiness for a great spectacle. Long before the time announced for the opening of the sports, the rising tiers of seats (such as we see in a modern circus) were alive with faces ; old faces and young faces, worn and wrinkled faces, plump and ruddy faces ; faces of women whose immense head dresses towered high above their heads, to the great disgust of those immediately behind them, and faces of men whose cloaks fluttered in jaunty rivalry with the ribbons of the women. A special reserved stage was occupied by senators, consuls, and prætors, who vied with each other in the splendor of their satin garments, and the number of their slaves.

The sports began with a few pugilistic encounters ; but the people had become so used to seeing Christians torn and devoured by wild beasts, that every other spectacle lost its interest for them. So they shouted to bring on the "Atheists:" and several were brought into the arena and left to the mercy of brutes which had been kept purposely without food in order to ensure a good appetite in them against the exhibition. Yet we read in the Acts of the Martyrs, that notwithstanding this precaution, those beasts, less brutal and bloodthirsty than their managers, in many instances forgot their cunning and ferocity, and licked the feet and hands of the holy victims who were cast into the ring. When, on the present occasion, several victims lay dying on the sand, their pure souls rejoicing while their quivering flesh bore testimony to excruciating physical suffering, Irene was brought forth and given a place opposite the Emperor's dais. A burst of admiration greeted her appearance ; and her modest bearing excited, for the nonce, the respect of the male spectators and the envy of the pagan women. The slave who had caused her arrest, stood at the entrance to the panther's den, ready, anxious to pull aside the grated door, and let loose upon Irene the beast which was howling madly within. The choice of alternatives was fairly placed before her by the magistrates ; and the nods and head-shaking of the gray-haired senators might convince her of the folly of further resisting the boundless power of the emperor. Then some of the most learned men, who had prepared new objections to her faith since their last defeat, hurled these haughtily at her, and challenged her to meet them. For a few minutes she remained silent, and the vast assemblage of scores of thousands held their

breath to catch her first words. The wind ceased to moan, the canvas to rustle, and the roaring of the savage animals in the dens was hushed. Irene remembered the Lord's promise, and felt that it would be given her what to say for her Faith when led before tyrants; and under this inspiration she set forth, in a voice of music and language that seemed divine, the truth and moral beauty of the religion she professed. As she swept along through mazes of eloquent speech, in tones which carried conviction to many a heart, begot healthful doubt in others, and aroused bitter resentment in the disappointed magistrates who perceived her magical influence and feared the result, a stranger might imagine she was a messenger from the Divinity making a revelation to a fallen race. "Shall we thus be made fools of by a woman?" said one of the judges to his colleagues, and rising up in a rage, "are the emperor's decrees to be laughed at, and the gods blasphemed by this sorceress? See, the people are cheering her already; they will soon adore her." Then, turning to the musicians, he ordered the trumpets to be sounded, so as to drown her voice. The sky at the same moment became overcast, and rain began to pour down upon the exposed thousands. The canvas awning was partially drawn across; but this shut out so much of the light that it looked in the amphitheatre like the gloaming. The order was given to remove Irene to the centre of the arena. She advanced with a firm tread to the place indicated for the struggle. Her arms folded, her eyes cast down she stood calmly waiting for the end. Men in the same situation, on the same spot, but armed with dagger or lance, had trembled as they stood doubtful of the issue; but the Christian martyr, with no arm save prayer, yielded not to fear, and hungered for the encounter. She thought indeed, of Julius, of the bitter disappointment that would be his, and she prayed fervently for him. But in presence of death, why should even *he* engross her thoughts? A murmur of manifest discontent arose from the benches; hisses and groans mingled with the cheers which re-echoed through the vast edifice. The people did not relish the interruption, and expressed their disapproval in the most marked way. "Do your duty quickly, slave," cried the master of the games who began to fear a possible attempt at a rescue. What with the shouting of sixty thousand throats, the roaring of half a hundred wild beasts, the blare of

many trumpets, the flapping of the canvas overhead, the pattering of the rain, and the pealing of the thunder without, the Coliseum became at this moment a scene of wildest disorder. Many a one terrified by the vivid flashes of lightning which, following quickly on the heels of the deafening thunder, lit up the place with an unnatural and death-like splendor, slunk away through narrow private stairways, or sat trembling and unnerved in their seats, while others, vexed and annoyed at the disappointing turn things had taken, rose up and prepared to depart, crowding into and filling the spacious aisles which led to the general points of egress. But a savage cry which came from a panther rejoicing over his release from his iron cage, recalled the interest of all, and riveted their attention once more upon the arena. Now, at the very moment when the beast sprang into the ring and crouched for his attack upon Irene, a man, hatless, all dripping with rain which had evidently saturated his military uniform, his hair disordered and his whole appearance betokening frenzy, was seen by many thousands of curious eyes, rushing through one of the arched openings to the circus, and struggling through the surging crowds in the aisles, towards the arena. Men swore at him, resisted him, struck at him, and women shrank away from him, or were pushed ruthlessly aside as he fought his way onward till he reached the wire guard-rail, which he cleared at a bound; and before the exclamations of surprise or anger died on the lips of those who used them, he had dashed, sword in hand, at the crouching panther. Irene was standing facing the beast, which had circled about her several times, when she saw the strange figure bounding into the ring. By her, as by every one else, such an intrusion was unexpected; and although she was in presence of a violent death, she raised her eyes from the form of the panther and fixed them on the newcomer.

"Julius," she shrieked, and fell to the earth. The panther was upon her and drove its sharp teeth into her shoulder. But as it did so, the sword of Julius was buried to the hilt in its side. With a terrific yell it loosened its hold, sprang off its victim, and making directly for its den bounded upon the slave who had incautiously ventured down into the ring. He was still trembling with the delight he experienced at seeing Irene devoured, when it seized him by the throat. That bite

was its last; it dropped dead upon the slave's body, which was found to be so horribly lacerated as to leave the wretch no hope of recovery. The next instant Julius had lifted the bleeding form of his betrothed from the sand, and passionately kissed her brow as the hot tears streamed down his glowing cheeks.

"Too late, my beloved" said Irene regaining consciousness. "Too late have we met; but—but shall we meet in —?" Julius understood her—understood rather her look than her words which were utterly inaudible. "Yes," he replied; "yes, my love, I am a Christian, I am one in my heart: is it enough?" As Irene answered: "It is, but you may not resist them;" they were surrounded by a dozen armed men.

The storm clouds suddenly folded themselves up, and the sun once more beamed through the cleared sky, as if rejoicing over the reunion of the long separated lovers. No one understood the extraordinary scene. Everyone was standing; some talking loudly, others silent, wondering whether it was a by-play, prepared by the master of the games, to surprise the people. Even the soldiers sent into the arena to arrest the intruder, were in doubt about the originality of the astounding spectacle—it looked, they said, so like a play—until one of them recognized Julius, and passed the word from mouth to mouth, "Lientenant Caius Julius has disgraced his rank." "Command silence," said Julius, addressing the magistrates. The sign was given, and the clamorous multitudes bent their attention to the soldier. "This lady," the lieutenant began, "is my betrothed wife. I returned from Spain to claim her hand, but to my horror learned that she was a prisoner, and likely to be condemned, not for a crime—she is incapable of that—but because she worships a different God from yourselves." The attention of the Coliseum was now, thoroughly, painfully aroused, and the audience straining forward to catch his words fixed their eyes upon the manly form of Julius, as he stood confronting the Senators, his left arm supporting Irene, his right extended towards the Imperial throne. "I have fought for my country," he continued in a voice which resounded through the theatre, and reached the farthest off topmost benches, "and I have spilled my blood on many fields beneath the Roman eagles. I am ready to sacrifice further all I hold dear

on earth, my very life for the safety of the Commonwealth, But I cannot engage in a cause that will end in disaster, because unjust. When the Emperor raises his powerful arm against the all-powerful God of the Christians, he invites destruction, and hails the ruin of his country and mine. I am no longer his subject in a cause so unholy, I resign my sword and my commission, and enrol myself under the banner of the Cross." A murmur of applause, which begun to swell into a cheer, was speedily checked by the trumpet signal, and Julius proceeded with his oration, or rather apology. "I have travelled from the burning sands of Sahara to the far Hyrcanian forests," said he, "and from Britain to the farthest provinces of Spain, and everywhere I have found Christians. Not alone among the poor and the illiterate have I discovered them. I have given no small share of my time to the study of philosophy, as my comrades-in-arms, some of whom I see about me, are aware; and among those whom you call Atheists, though they worship the Creator of the Universe, I have met men and women—here he looked proudly down at Irene—who were able to instruct me in the highest branches of the abstruse sciences, and who afforded the brightest examples of lofty faith, unselfish love, and unassailable chastity, in an age when the scepticism and immorality of this great city, the mistress of the world, is a scandal to the most degraded barbarians. Their pure morality as well as their sublime doctrines, which I have carefully examined, have persuaded me that their religion is from God; and if Cæsar will degrade me or even take my life because of this persuasion, I here freely declare that I am prepared to part with it." "Seize him, guards," cried the horrified magistrates all together, "seize him; he excites the people to sedition." "Disarm him, disarm him," shouted the furious prætors; "he blasphemes against the gods and the Emperor." The soldiers, at first stupefied, now set about obeying their orders; and while they tore his armour from Julius and his sword, deafening cries and contradictory orders filled the air with a confused sound. Some cheered the lieutenant's speech, and waved their handkerchiefs in sympathy and approval; others cried "Let loose the lions on both of them"; while others simply shouted vociferously without expressing any articulate words. In vain the senators waved their hands, and the

trumpeters blew their horns ; and for a full five minutes it was impossible either to give or receive any orders whatsoever. But the exertions of the men in charge of the lions to open the iron cages at last brought the babel of noises to a hushed still ; all knew what was now coming ; the lions were to be let loose.

Irene sank on her knees and prayed for strength, not for herself, but for Julius, to pass triumphantly through this new ordeal. Reverently he knelt down beside her, and with the zeal of a convert exclaimed, "I am happy : we die together." Hundreds who were unwilling to witness the last act of this fearful tragedy went out of the building as fast as the crowded state of the aisles would allow, and in this way offered a feeble protest against the inhuman policy of the State. The cages were at length opened, and the lions just about to rush out upon the intrepid lovers when the order was revoked, and a signal given to remove the martyrs to the prison. The cause of this hasty change of programme was a message received from one of the Emperor's attendants, who entered breathless through a secret passage. It was immediately read for the people, and ran thus : "The Emperor is unwell ; the games shall cease." Disappointment was depicted on many a countenance, and many cursed the Emperor under their breath, for interfering, by his sickness, with their pleasures. Then they slowly departed, leaving the Coliseum to the prisoners, the guards, and the wild beasts. Julius and Irene were again separated and brought to the Mamertine, where they were locked up in dungeons as far apart as the cruel jailers could place them.



CHAPTER XXVI.

A LIGHT IN THE DUNGEON.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Going they went and wept casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness carrying their sheaves."—Ps. 125.

WHEN Julius found himself, for the first time in his life in a dungeon, his sense of outraged manhood and citizenship caused him to feel the indignity most keenly. The filth and stench of the place, and the absence of sunlight gave the damp cell such a dismal, dreary air as accorded well with the spirit of the cult which threw unoffending Christians into it. It had such a chilling effect upon Julius, that if anything could shake his new found faith it would be a short residence in such a place. But he soon found that his lot there was comparatively pleasant.

It was early that morning when he arrived at Ostia, and his hasty journey towards the city left him no time to take food. His intention was to have his morning meal at the house of a certain acquaintance and then visit Irene; but the intelligence received as soon as he reached the gate, put every thought of self out of his head. He hurried on to the house where Irene lived—she had told him in her letter where it was—with a faint hope that the Irene spoken of by those low fellows might not, after all, be *his* betrothed. This hope vanished when he reached the mansion once owned by Flavius Clement. The place was closed, and the neighbors informed him of the fate of its owners. Then he turned towards the Forum, but it was abandoned; all interest was absorbed by the great spectacle to come off in the Coliseum. It was already late, an hour beyond the time; but he hurried on resolved to rescue or to die with his bride, though even to see her alive would have gratified him then beyond his

diminishing expectations. Well, he saw her alive and was recognized by her ; he had pressed her fainting form to his breast and supported her in his arms while he proclaimed to the world his love for her, and for the religion she professed even unto the enduring of stripes and shedding of blood. And as he sat on the cold stone floor of the Mamertine and peered into the gloom, and shivered for cold, hunger and exhaustion, the thought of these things consoled him and reconciled him to his fate. After awhile he arose and cautiously paced his dungeon, in order to keep himself moderately warm. "Do not step on me," said a feeble voice out of the darkness of a corner. "My God," exclaimed Julius, stopping suddenly, "whose voice is that?" He had thought he was alone. It would have startled him to discover anyone else present ; but he was clearly amazed to hear *that* voice. "A Christian," repeated the voice in answer to the question,—*"but whose voice do I hear?"* it continued, "I have heard it before!" "Cyprian," cried Julius, with just the barest tinge of doubt in his accent. "Julius, Julius, it is the voice of Julius," groaned the sufferer at the same instant. A little oil lamp hung from the ceiling and threw a dull circle of light upward. Julius reached for it, pulled it down, and went, stepping carefully in search of the priest. He was lying quite naked on the floor, his sides and hands and feet swollen in a shocking manner. Tears started to the eyes of both men as they recognized each other's features, and Julius laying the lamp upon the floor knelt down and embraced the prostrate manacled victim of pagan civilization. A few words explained all. The tale was too harrowing, perhaps, for the neophyte's ears, so Cyprian touched but lightly on his own sufferings. "You, too, are wounded," said he, as he noticed blood on the face of his comrade. "I did not know it," said Julius, lifting his hands to his face to discover his wounds. A deep gash in his left cheek caused by the panther's claws, and a cut across the temple, the result of a blow from the back of a sabre in the hands of one of the soldiers who had arrested him, were all he could find then. "It is nothing," said the soldier, "but let me pour this oil upon your sores;" and extinguishing the lamp he suited the action to the word. "We have no need of light here now," said he, as he looked down at Cyprian through the gloom. "No," replied the priest, "we are light enough for

each other." Then, after a pause, both men began to speak on the same instant, the same thought being uppermost in their minds.

What a gap they had to fill up since their last meeting! Julius yielded to Cyprian, who asked, "have you ever heard of Irene?" "Have you?" inquired the soldier, trying to be composed. "Unless a woman who spoke to me when I was on the rack were she, I have never heard of my sister," said the priest; "then added, 'if it was not Irene it was her angel.'" "And if that woman was not my betrothed, I am beside myself," said Julius, with just a touch of mirth which he could not repress. "Explain what—tell me, tell me quickly, have you discovered her?" "I have," answered Julius. "I found her all too late—" "Dead?" interjected her brother. "Not dead," continued Julius, "but in the arena, and she is now under the same hospitable roof as ourselves." "Thank God," said Cyprian, "what an honor to be worthy of martyrdom; perhaps we shall all three die together." "I," replied Julius, "would not wish to outlive her." After the soldier had given him all the particulars, Cyprian related what he had heard of Irene since his arrival in the city, particularly her heroism during the plague; yet it had not occurred to him that she was his sister, having met so many with the same name. Thus the day passed on, and while Irene lay moaning alone in another part of the prison, her bitten shoulder causing her untold pain, her brother and her lover allayed each other's sufferings and diverted their thoughts from present woes by relating the strange or perilous incidents in their past and widely different careers. When the sun went down the guard brought to all the prisoners an allowance of bread and water.

An hour passed and they were startled by the unexpected grating of the outer doors on their hinges. What could it mean? Perhaps another strangulation scene. The guard finally reached the inner doors and threw them open. "Let all prisoners accused of being Christians come out." Julius went out. "The Emperor is dead," said the guard, "you are free." As Julius was about to turn back in order to bring Cyprian the news, he saw Irene coming towards him. Her face was pale and wore a sad look, and her gait was uncertain. In an instant Julius was at her side, supporting her and speaking

to her words of triumphant hope and love. "At last," said he, "we have found each other; and who shall ever again separate us?" For a while she could not reply, she could only weep; but at last she said faintly, "death, only death." And as she looked up into the manly face of her lover, she smiled through the tears that flowed as much on account of her pains, as of the unexpected pleasure which overtook her. "Cyprian," she murmured then, "Cyprian, my brother, was tortured a few days ago, and I must find out what has become him. He is dead, I am sure," she then added, "he could not live." "I know him," said Julius. "You know him? How, where, when did you see him? O Heavens, you *knew* him, my poor brother!" "Do not weep, my love," said Julius, smiling, he is here in—" "Here!" echoed Irene, startled. "Yes," said Julius, "and alive under this roof; I have been with him in the same cell since our incarceration; but you cannot see him now, you cannot bear it." "I can bear anything," replied Irene, confidently. "Where is he? O tell me where he is. I must see him at once." And she saw him in the cell lit by the jailer's lantern. Heavens, what a meeting was this! What a combination of gladness and of pain; what a conflict of emotions it engendered! What heart opening and heart breaking! Julius was right; it was too much for Irene to bear. She knelt beside her brother to caress him, to comfort him and be consoled in turn. Was it the fulfilment of her dream? In a few minutes the excitement overpowered her, and Julius—who from a sense of delicacy had remained without, had to enter and carry her away and out into the cool evening air. He left her in a place of safety and returned with an ambulance to bring thither her brother with all possible speed.



CHAPTER XXVII.

SUNSHINE.

"Then before all they stand,—the holy vow
And ring of gold, no fond illusions now
Bind her as his.——"

—SAMUEL ROGERS.

THREE months after the above recorded events transpired, as the morning sun emerged from the hills that bordered the horizon, little knots of people might be seen wending their way to a house adjoining the Flavian mansion. They were Christians who wished to be present at a ceremony in the church of their restored bishop, St. Clement, the third successor of St. Peter in the Roman See. The church was Clement's house, owned by him before he became a Christian, and now consecrated to the service of God. Part of this church is still visible underneath the present San Clemente, and is in a remarkably good state of preservation. Entering this chapel, the men went to one side, the women to the other, and all lay prostrate for some minutes in secret prayer. When the clergy entered all stood up, and a strange and motley crowd it was. Of all ages and conditions in society, many of them bore marks of the recent persecution. There were women whose face and ears were disfigured, and men without hands or on crutches, their feet having been cut off or burned; and many were warped into odd shapes by the force of the tortures they had endured on the rack or under the teeth of wild beasts in the theater. There were many new faces there, some of them senators, whose awkward movements proved their recent entrance to the fold; while in and near the vestibule there were a few who lay prostrate during the whole service, over whose bodies it was necessary to walk in order to enter the church.

These were the few who had denied the faith under threats or torture, and who now were expiating their apostacy by this humiliating penance.

The clergy, all dressed in long white garments, with some varieties and badges to indicate their rank, now entered, followed by the venerable Clement himself wearing a purple cloak, and in his left hand carrying a golden staff. He took his seat at the lowest part of the sanctuary proper, a part walled off by fluted marble columns, from the rest of the church. After all had knelt a while, Cyprian advanced to the front of the sanctuary, attended by a number of clergy of lower degree, bearing torches. He looked young and fresh, a slight lameness being the only indication of his recent horrible sufferings. From the women's side of the chapel a lady dressed in white arose, followed by two others, and at the same time three men arose and advanced from their side, to join the women who now knelt before the priest. The center couple were, of course, Julius, who had been baptized, and Irene. They were married by the bride's brother, whose emotion was shared by the principals, and in fact by the whole body of the clergy and people. Afterwards the Scriptures were read by the deacons, and the bread and wine were blessed and consecrated by the Bishop. A solemn hush, such as the Apocalyptic writer ascribes to Heaven, reigned about, from this awful moment till the time for Communion. Then nearly all who were present—the married couple first—advanced to receive from the hands of priests the consecrated species, and returned reverently to their places. When all had made a suitable thanksgiving to the Lord whom they had received, they joined in a hymn of praise for the peace which had come to the Church, after the dreadful storm that was desolating it. Then the holy Bishop advanced to the front of the sanctuary, and after saying a few words of encouragement and advice to the happy bride and her heroic companion, imparted the usual benediction to the departing worshippers.

The reader would, in all probability, like to hear something now of Anna, whom we left so unceremoniously in a former chapter; but as our story has come to a close, we cannot attempt to say more than a few words about her. As soon after the marriage as he could arrange his affairs, Julius, with

his handsome bride and Cyprian, set sail from Ostia for Alexandria in Egypt. They expected of course to meet Anna, still in the household of Nilos, and ambitious to serve the Church. They had a pleasant voyage—full of hope, and brimming with innocent delight: but when they reached the African capital they found that both Nilos and Anna had suffered death for the Faith, about the same time, that they were themselves undergoing tortures for the same cause at Rome. They met Zelta, whom Cyprian instantly recognised as the person who had saved his life, when the pagan priest attacked him; and from her learned all the particulars of the martyr's life recorded in the pages of this story. Through the former slave—she was a free woman now—they were made acquainted with Arbax, at whose house, to her inexpressible delight, Irene saw the child, now a beautiful young woman, whom she had met in the robber's cave of Cumæ. These women wept and laughed by turns, as the events of those days came back to their recollection; but their present happiness was so complete that although their former sufferings came very vividly before them, they were able to look at them with equanimity, nay, even with a species of regret. The assurance of Irene that the old robber and pirate had died a penitent Christian, mollified the irate Arbax, who, even after the restoration of his daughter, did not wholly get rid of a grudge for her abductor; and after listening to the tale of his distressing end, he went so far as to express his willingness to part with another daughter under similar circumstances, if he could be sure that through her he would meet another Irene. All such compliments as these were highly pleasing to Julius, who loved his wife as the fondest of husbands should, and venerated her besides, as a martyr to the truth. By the way, of all the marriage presents Irene received, that which she most prized was the kerchief stained with the martyr's blood, which Julius had obtained from the soldier in Gaul.

Cyprian became permanently attached to the Alexandrian Church, and was afterwards made a Bishop. Arbax lived to a good old age, to see all his children happily settled in life, and Zelta, notwithstanding the fact that she had received an honorable proposal, remained in a state of perpetual virginity, so as to be like, as she expressed it, "the sweet Mother of God,

and our Lord Himself." Julius and Irene lived happily together in their adopted country, and never wanted a fund of incident and adventure, with which to gratify the frequent requests of their children "to tell them a story." One only grief occasionally clouded Irene's spirits—the fact that she never saw her cousin, from the moment they parted in the High Priest's palace. But as Arbax had looked after the decent burial of Anna's body, and that of Nilos who through her had embraced the faith, it afforded her great consolation to kneel at the Saint's tomb, and gathering her children about her, to direct their prayers, with her own, to the throne of mercy, through the intercession of their martyred relative.

Centuries have rolled by since the thrilling events here recorded took place, and the bones of these heroic children of an erst despised and persecuted creed are reduced to dust in graves which no living person can locate. But their memory lives in the pages of story, and will continue to whisper, till the end of time, into the hearts of all of us who are attentive that true and lasting honor is best secured by firm adherence to the principles of rectitude, as dictated by sound reason and Divine teaching.

THE END.

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